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NEWSZINE

JUNE

108

RPGA® NETWORK

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Notes from HQ

Remembering to Laugh...

I discovered role playing games in 1982, when my brother Martin and I drove back from a family reunion in Durant, Oklahoma. I had heard about the AD&D® game, but was a bit intimidated by its complexity. Martin, who'd played in college, explained what characteristics, hit points, and character classes were. I asked questions, and he patiently listened and replied. By the end of the two-hour car ride, I was curious and ready to try it.

My first game was a private one; my brother was the Dungeon Master, and a friend, Daryl, played a fighter. I played a half-elf magic user/thief named Elron. We had a good time, though Elron, swinging through the trees at the end of a rope, was squished between the root-like toes of a passing malevolent treant. We all laughed, and Martin urged me to roll up another character.

Eventually my brother tired of running his game. I searched for another game, and discovered that some people played at local science-fiction conventions. I soon discovered that our local cons were not especially good gaming venues, though I did learn to appreciate and enjoy those conventions for what they did offer: free munchies, great authors and artists, and new friends.

One year, after taking a look at the GEN CON® Game Fair pre-registration material in DRAGON® Magazine, I made up my mind to attend. I got a cut-rate airfare, stayed out at Sandburg Hall (on the University of Wisconsin/Milwaukee campus), and had the time of my life: four days and nights of non-stop adventure! I made up my mind then never to miss such an opportunity again.

The next year at the Game Fair, I played in my first RPGA® Network tournament, *The Black Rose*. I joined the Network right after I got up from the table. I returned to Oklahoma knowing that I had to bring this same excitement back to the conventions at home.

Donald Dennis and I ran our first Network tournament that same fall at SoonerCon, and the response was electric. Everybody wanted to play, and we almost couldn't find enough judges. I actually wore a tie to judge the finals (a tradition that I maintain to this day). From that point on, the Network was on the rise in Oklahoma.

The Network was something to take pride in, something to rally around. My friends and I ran games at every convention that we could, and the demand for events and judges soon outgrew our ability to supply them. We formed the Players' Guild of Central Oklahoma, and together the ten of us organized gaming at most of the Oklahoma conventions those next two years.

I still went to the Game Fair, and each year Jean Rabe asked me to do something new. I judged, and loved it (though I must admit I had that first tournament memorized by slot one). Then something amazing happened: Cheryl McNally-Frech asked me if I would judge the feature, and handed me the round. I was stunned, but I got my players seated, and after a while, I was running one of the best games of my life. I don't think I have ever thanked her for challenging me like that, but thanks, Cheryl!

I played in my first masters tournament and had what I consider to be my peak experience in role playing. Suffice it to say that our team, the Army of the Purple Lace Bloomers, beat up a bunch of awestruck ogres and rescued our halfling friends. All six players and the judge were rolling on the floor with laughter afterward. No one wanted to vote; we already knew we had each been a winner. When first place was announced and my name was called, I was flabbergasted. The other people on my team stood up and cheered for me, and I was speechless. Larry, Fran, Phil, Dennis, and Robert, I owe each of you a Cherry Coke. I stood in the awards line behind Don Bingle, the ranking Network player, and he congratulated me. I almost passed out.

As you might imagine, everything after that has been pretty much downhill. I got to work security at GEN CON Network HQ, where an older gentleman with long mustaches and a gnarled wooden staff sat next to me and chatted amiably with me one Sunday morning. We talked about role playing, the Game Fair, the Network, and made jokes about how serious everyone seemed to be. The guy turned out to be Frank Mentzer, the first Network coordinator.

I have gained many opportunities through Network membership: a shot at writing for the Newszine, the chance to be a club president, and the good fortune to help others by being a Regional Director. Through the Network I have gotten the opportunity to game with wonderful players, judge incredible teams through club competitions (and even dance a waltz with Marshall Simpson at the Game Fair awards ceremonies—to a Clint Heilman rap). I have had so much fun and met so many new friends along the way, I feel the money I've spent on membership has been the best investment I've ever made.

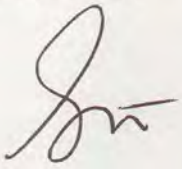
And now I get to pay the Network back for all the good times I've had, all the excitement, all the fun. I still can't believe how fortunate I am to have this opportunity to serve the Network, to actually get paid for doing things I've loved doing for years.

As I look at the Network, what it has meant to me as a member, and what it means to so many, I begin to see how I got here: the Network's commitment to quality. I enjoyed Network events because they were so much better than the ones in which I had played before. I joined because of the distinction that went with being a Network player and judge. And I continued to renew my membership because I believed in that quality, that dedication to excellence.

I affirm that commitment to excellence in role playing games—all role playing games. It has always been and continues to be the Network's mission.

As I take on the responsibilities held by individuals like Frank Mentzer, Kim Eastland, Penny Petticord, Harold Johnson, and Jean Rabe, I am reminded of that mission, but also of the gentle, self-effacing humor with which each of them served the Network.

I hope we all remember to laugh at ourselves every once in a while...



About the Cover
Jim Holloway's cover illustrates well some of the perils to be faced on the Malatran plateau.

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Forgotten Deities

Sebek

by Eric Boyd

Power: Demi-
Plane: Prime
AoC: Rivers, crocodiles
Align: N (E)
WAL: NE
Symbol: Crocodile head
Sex: Male

Sebek is an ancient minor Untheric deity, depicted as a crocodile-headed man, who was worshipped in the wetlands of ancient Unther, away from the cities. This cult has been persecuted for several centuries, and prior to the Fall of the Gods, had largely died out. All crocodiles are said to be the children of Sebek. Some sages speculate Sebek was once worshipped in the southeastern Realms as Haaashastaak, Master of all Lizardkind, but the same claim is made more strongly for Ubtao, Lord of Chult, lending doubt to that claim.

Like other minor gods, the already weakened Sebek was an easy target during the Time of Troubles. Malar, the Beastlord, took advantage of the opportunity and slew the Lord of Crocodiles in a titanic battle that destroyed large sections of the Adderswamp. Malar has subsequently revitalized the Cult of Sebek and turned the City of the Werecrocodiles into a growing regional power, filling the void left by the collapse of the city of Luthcheq. Bands of werecrocodiles have begun taxing all trade in the Bay of Chessenta, and are responsible for the disappearance of several small companies of mercenaries fighting in the war between the Airspur-Soorenar alliance and Akanax. The reptilian lycanthropes have claimed all of the Adderswamp and the Bay of Chessenta as their domain, although none of the surrounding cities have commented on this development. Previous conflicts between wererats dwelling in the Adderswamp and the werecrocodiles have been smoothed over by an alliance of lycanthrope priests of both species who worship Malar or Malar/Sebek. Malar's domain in the South is likely to be strongly challenged in the immediate future by the surrounding human cities concerned by the werecrocodiles' increasing military power and the effects of the additional taxation on trade.

illustration by Phillip Robb

Sebek's Priests

All priests of Sebek/Malar must be werecrocodiles, and all are specialty priests. True lycanthropes are limited to 5th level, while those humans and demihumans infected with lycanthropy are limited to 3rd level. Priests gain an additional 1d4 hit points per level.

AB Con 12*, Str 18 (note that all werecrocodiles have an 18 strength, as described in FR 10 *Old Empires*); **AL** NE; **WP** any; **AR** none; **RA** none; **SP** All, Animal, Combat, Elemental, Plant; **SPL** nil; **PW** as werecrocodiles, 3)suggestion(W3) (only to convince the victim that the priest is truly grieving–see the Combat section in the description of the werecrocodile in FR 10 *Old Empires*), 5) sticks to crocodiles (as sticks to snakes (P4)); **TU** nil; **QS** animal horde (entire horde composed of crocodiles).

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The Ravens Bluff Trumpeter

Discount Merlin's House O' Critters To Open In March!

The biggest "adventure amusement park" in all of Faerun will open this March in Ravens Bluff, a DMI, Inc. (formerly Discount Merlin Industries, Inc.) spokesperson announced this week. Called *Discount Merlin's House o' Critters*, the new facility will allow adventurers to gain needed experience without the inconvenience of traveling to the depths of the wilderness.

"Why go to the dungeon when the dungeon can come to you?" said Connor-of-Galway, DMI's CEO. "We here at *DMHOC* (a wholly- owned subsidiary of DMI, Inc.) offer a full range of adventuring opportunities at a very reasonable price. Our encounters are tailored for anyone from the weekend warrior to the most battle-hardened adventurers."

The facility will have three "slopes" of monsters segregated by power. The Green Slope is for beginning adventurers, while the Blue Slope features greater challenges and greater rewards. The Black Slope is for only the most daring or powerful adventuring parties.

Adventuring groups are being organized for the *Critter Crusade*, to collect featured attractions for the Grand Opening. The DMHOC staff has located the critters, and will provide this information to brave adventurers. These heroes will be immortalized on plaques near monsters they capture. Parties wishing to join the `*Crusade* must register this summer at the temporary DMHOC Interactive Offices, on the site of the demolished Chemcheaux complex.

Mr. of-Galway refused to comment on rumors of a wandering trap known as *The Pudding Pit*, in which clients encounter numerous slimes, oozes and jellies. Of-Galway would say only, "We here at DMHOC pledge to you, the consumer: *no rotting diseases*. And of course, there's just no excuse for piercers."

Safety is DMHOC's top priority, of-Galway said. "We screen all customers, and do not allow them to select a slope beyond their capabilities. We have certified healers, a full infirmary, and a variety of health insurance options. We also staff a company of giff warriors organized as our Quick Response Team. The QRT will scramble at a moment's notice to extricate heroes who bite off more than they can chew. These services are very reasonably priced."

The site also offers a restaurant and gift shop, where satisfied customers can buy souvenirs, including T-shirts and magically recorded songs to commemorate their DMHOC experience.

Finally, Mr. of-Galway emphasized the wholesome family experience offered at DMHOC. "Remember, the purpose is to defeat monsters, not destroy them. We're all living beings, and critters have rights too. So we say to overzealous adventurers right there in our contract: *If you butcher it, you buy it.*"

Discount Merlin's House o' Critters opens March 1996 at the Concentric convention in Chicago. The Critter Crusade is held this summer at Origins (July, Philadelphia), Dragoncon (July, Atlanta), the GEN CON® Game Fair (August, Milwaukee) and AndCon (September, Toledo). Sign up onsite or contact the conventions for details.

Gnome Declared Outlaw

Mohammed, a well-known local adventurer, has resurfaced after his apparent death last year. Several citizens say they witnessed his death, and priests who attempted to raise him claim their attempt was unsuccessful. The *Trumpeter* has learned, however, that several adventurers hired to investigate the disappearance of city watchmen in the town's sewers state that the culprit was spotted in one of the search teams, and that in front of numerous witnesses he stabbed an innocent svirfneblin, making off with the dead gnome's valuables afterward. In view of so many vehement complaints from residents, the Magistrate has taken the unprecedented step of declaring Mohammed a villainous outlaw and subject to capture for extradition to svirfneblin authorities.

"We've put all City Watch patrols on alert," said Chief Constable Rolf Sunriver, "Mohammed may have caused us trouble before, but we're going to bring him to justice this time." Rumors the gnome may be undead are unfounded, asserted Sunriver, but added that any citizens found consorting with Mohammed face the possibility of accessory charges when the criminal is found.

The player character known as Mohammed was declared evil at the WINTER FANTASY™ convention this February. Since evil PCs are not allowed in the LIVING CITY™ campaign, the character is no longer allowed in play. Look forward to his appearance (as an NPC) in upcoming LIVING CITY tournaments.

A "STERN" Denial

(An Open Letter to the Mayor)

Deer Hizonuhr de Mayahr,

Jest a szchohrt gnote to be szuhre ya gnow dat I vas not ahround vhen Kimshoes blowed up! I vasn't eben dehr!

I gnow dat I had inschpected da bildin jest befohr da laszt auckshun, but I didn't see nuttin vhat coud causze szuch an hickszchploshun! (szpecially, if ya don't count none o' dem magik tings vhat vas in da bildin!)

I szchuhre hope dis don't mean dat I am losen da johb of bildin inschpecthre on accounta I kinda like it, and Rosie is phroud, and I have only been it for a szchohrt time, and I'm leahrnin to hrite and all. Hope yehr bildin comes back hreally szoon.

Yehr fhriend,

Gildedsturn "Sturn" Shakspear
Gnome, (Roziecranz's Tvin)
Bildin Inschpectre

P.S. I didn't hreally rhite dis, but I am leahrnin. I did hrite dis pahrt. (De szchort pahrt.)

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Elminster's Everwinking Eye

The End of the Road in Turmish

by Ed Greenwood

Our treasure tour of Turmish comes to an end in this column. Turmish is a lovely land (though easy to get lost in), and its winding lanes and dense woods probably hide even richer tales and treasures than those contained herein. Adventurers should beware, however, that Turmish has more than its share of eccentrics and mighty folk who have withdrawn from the cut-and-thrust of life in places like Sembia, Amn, Chessenta, Westgate, and even Thay. The old joke about every second woodcutter being an archmage is likely truer here than in anywhere else in Faerun (except Halruaa). As the old ranger Halagard once put it, "Visiting Turmish? Then forget not—manners are made to be minded."

The best sort of treasure is the sort you don't have to go looking for—and falls into your hands as a pleasant surprise. When it does, look quickly over your shoulder to be sure someone hasn't seen your treasure, and is preparing to hand you an unpleasant surprise.

—Alairtelle Mistrym,
Lady of Llorbauth
Thoughts For Ladies Fair
The Year of the Bright Blade

With those warnings in mind, let us take a last look (for now) at one of the most interesting "overlooked backwaters" of Faerun—The Land of Surprises, Turmish. Our place-by-place alphabetical tour has brought us to:

Sambryntyn

This strategically-located town of tall, narrow stone houses and winding cobbled lanes sees a lot of passing trade to and from rich Alaghôn and the mines and farms of the interior. Named for Oloegar Sambryntyn, the halfling who founded it many years ago (a stout old patriarch who grew ponderously fat, and became a great-great-grandfather many times over before he died), Sambryntyn is a place of mills and warehouses and factories, where furniture and clothing is made in bulk, money is lent and exchanged for bulk goods, and grain is milled and packed into sacks for distribution all over the Inner Sea lands. If a sack or a piece of furniture bears a small mark that looks like a hand projecting downwards out of a hat, it came from Sambryntyn (Oloegar's mark is now used by all major industries in town).

The slate roofs of Sambryntyn entirely fill a small, bowl-like valley (often overlaid with smoke and echoing with the clatter of carts and the ringing blows of hammers), but it is a pleasant place, possessing none of the squalid filth so often seen in larger cities.

Amid all this cheerful bustle and money are inevitable tales about coins that have gone missing over the years. Not all of the stories are true; some of the moneylenders who vanished overnight took their funds with them, and others, who were found dead with their wealth gone, were robbed by rivals before their bones were cold. Yet there remain a dozen or more tales about eccentric folk known to be wealthy, who spent freely and yet died without a copper in their homes. They cannot all have been careless tosscoins throwing their wealth away; some of the suspicions of hidden caches of money (in hollow walls, down cellars, and up on roofs) must be true. This is supported by finds made by various folk rebuilding houses they'd bought (especially humans forced to remove floors of onetime halfling homes so they could stand up rather than spending all their days hunched over); sacks of gold and silver coins were often hidden between ceilings and floors.

Sambryntyn also has a larger treasure-tale. Somewhere under the waters of one of the swiftly-flowing streams that cascade into the valley is a key abandoned by the gold dragon Adamarondor, when he left town (disguised as a female human barmaid) to become a servant of Divine Azuth (Adamarondor actually serves most of his time as a steed and messenger of The Magister). The key has been there for almost twenty summers.

The key is said to look like a long, slender-fingered human hand carved of ivory or moonstone, its palm displaying the "two pairs of back-to-back half-circles" rune of Adamarondor. Local lore records that Adamarondor, who wasn't believed at the time, told the customers at The Adept's Choice tavern about the key on "her" last night of work. Touching it to the right thing in her house, she said, would transform the thing into a door—opening into a cavern housing her treasure hoard.

One of the tavern patrons decided to check out the barmaid's wild tale a few days later, and was delighted to find the key—itself worth about 450 gp—just where she'd said it was, hanging on a hook in a closet of her otherwise empty, abandoned home.

illustration by Chris Deegan

The man touched the key to everything he could think of in the house, taking several days to complete the job—and then, angry and discouraged, set out for a drink. He was promptly attacked by someone else who'd heard the barmaid, but he managed to hurl the key into a nearby stream (the streams run into a cistern and then a sinkhole under the eastern end of town, and were then a lot less covered-over than they are today) as he fled, before a second thrust of the attacker's knife killed him.

The murderer searched the stream for days, not revealing why until years later, on his deathbed, when he confessed his deed—and that he'd never found the key.

The tale spread rapidly, and many folk searched for the key (even diving in the cistern until the town council, fearing for the purity of the drinking-water, put a stop to this) or advanced theories as to the truth of the whole affair or why the door hadn't been found. One interesting idea, put forward by the now-dead sage Aladaszs, has gained much popularity over the years: in human guise, the dragon owned at least six properties in town: perhaps one of the others was Adamarondor's "house."

Unfortunately, the key has never turned up, and many buildings in Sambryntyn bear enchantments, so the door (presumably) has never been found. Some citizens now dwelling in houses identified as owned by "Liliatha the barmaid" have reported stealthy break-ins and tappings late at night in recent years—so perhaps someone now has the key and is after the dragon's hoard in earnest...

Swordslake Creek

This mining hamlet is named for a long-ago massacre of orcs, in which a human war-band trying to establish a stronghold on a particular hill were set upon by a host of orcs, and "slaked their swords in orc blood from sunset to sunset." Whatever the truth about their valor and the strength of their swordarms, it is clear that the humans won the day and set up a fortified camp here, later a small keep and surrounding village—and today, after a mind flayer briefly took over the place and was destroyed in a spell-battle that shattered the keep, only a few homes and miners' supply stores remain.

That mind flayer, who used the name Alothgos and commanded enough magic to appear in human guise, is said to have hidden much gold in his two-season rule—gold armor, bowls, platters, and coins in plenty belonging to the lord he slew (a human warrior called Tagarth Iron-brow); none of this treasure was found after the illithid's destruction. Men searched the rubble of the collapsed keep for days, seeking even melted gold or gold dust—but found nothing. The treasure was gone.

Yet locals believe it is still in "the

Creek" somewhere—Alothgos is not known to have ever stepped out of the keep after assuming the title of lord, and he kept many bodyservants (some of the prettier young women seldom leaving his side); they don't recall any expeditions or visitations, even magical ones. They also recall gold bowls and platters in use right up to the night when the increasingly cruel lord was attacked by a cabal of mages he'd levied crippling taxes against (no doubt to drive them away), and the keep fell.

Most mages who've heard the tale believe the illithid used magic to teleport the gold away or to transform it so that it could be "hidden" in plain sight, appearing as something else. The latter is more likely, given the amount of gold and the brief time the illithid had to spare during the spellfray, so it's possible that several cartloads-worth of gold is still hidden in or near Swordslake Creek.

Tarnring

This remote mining and sheep-ranchers' village is a quiet settlement today, but it was once a lawless miners' camp (when the mines to the west were pouring forth gold) and later home to a powerful school of mages.

Only copper is brought out of the mines now (the gold long since depleted), and the school of mages vanished long ago (all slain in a challenge against Thay, some sages say). What remains of interest to adventurers are a few wild tales of buried gold (with possible lesser truths behind some of them) and a legacy of the school that none have so far been able to reach.

The tales of where miners (or those who swindled them) hid gold are many and varied, and anyone asking in the local taverns (The Bent Pick or The Leucrotta Rampant) can hear a headfull of them for the cost of a few tankards.

The hamlet was named for a ranger of note, Tarnring "the Tall," who slew or drove out the orcs and hobgoblins who infested the local mountains, thereby making the area safe for men. On the now-vanished site of Tarnring's Tomb (itself said to hold the ranger's favorite blade, a *longsword +5 defender*), a quartet of human female mages built their school. Their students came from Suzail, Selgaunt, Tsurlagol, and farther afield. The mages kept their affairs secret and escaped the notice of the powerful wizards in Alaghôn who acted so harshly against other mage-schools in the realm—or perhaps not: some believe the disaster in which they were all killed was not a duel against Thay at all, but trickery arranged by the wizards of Alaghôn.

Whatever their fate, local legend says they left all their spellbooks, everyday magic, and magical components behind in a cavern that even a hundred years of greedy visiting wizards haven't been able to reach.

The way to the cavern is well-known: in a rock cleft west of the hamlet stand twelve weathered, life-sized stone statues of human male wizards that powerful archmages have examined and insist aren't petrified beings, but simply statues. The statues stand in what seems to be a pattern—and we have the word of a former pupil (now long dead) that the way into the cavern was to stand in exactly the right spot (joining or completing the pattern), and cast a certain spell. Unfortunately, the pupil—who only saw this occur from afar, when he wasn't supposed to—wasn't sure which spell, and just where the caster should stand. All attempts to follow these instructions or to "break" the enchantment and force a passage or the yielding-up of how to make it work have failed... and a lot of very powerful archmages have tried (including, local lore insists, nearly all of the Red Wizards of Thay, one after another).

Adventurers are warned that several mysterious watchers seem to keep the statues under constant scrutiny—including a succession of folk who are probably Harpers, and a magical power (perhaps a Red Wizard) who has installed at least two gargoyles to perch motionless on the cliffs above the cleft, endlessly watching. There is a recent theory in the taverns of Tarnring that the gargoyles serve rival masters, and will fight each other should anyone win past the wizards' puzzle and vanish into the mage-school stronghold by means of the gate opened by the completion of the spell.

Ulver's Lance

This tranquil village is named for a warrior who kept the road through Turmish safe in the early days of the realm. He and his company of horse-archers and lancers patrolled the road, battling bugbears, orcs, goblins, and other creatures who preyed upon the mercantile traffic passing through the land.

Today it is a place of woodcarvers and cart-builders, who have little time for idle tales of past heroism—but are fond of a local treasure-tale: someone in the village has made a career of visiting sleeping folk at night, stealing a few coins from each.

Whoever it is has some means—perhaps magical—of making folk fall asleep or stay asleep and of passing through solid walls, closed doors, and shuttered windows.

Persistent local grumblings about thefts came to a head some dozen years ago, when a woodcutter boasted of falling into a cellar as he walked through the ruins of a burnt house on the edge of town—and finding himself in a room crammed with boxes and coffers and urns full of coins! In proof of his tale, he spent coins lavishly in the tavern where he told this—but was found headless in an alley the next morning.

Some of his companions rushed to the ruin he'd spoken of—and found an empty cellar room marked by many fresh boot-prints, as if one man had been there doing something very energetically not long before. Whether the treasure was found by someone listening in the tavern and taken away, or hastily moved elsewhere by the long-time thief who'd assembled it, no one seems to know.

Velorn's Valor

This village is another settlement named for the heroism of a warrior in the early days of the realm, when orcish warbands threatened the peace of the realm. Now a market-town for cattle-ranchers, it is notable to adventurers only because of a large, plain, battered shield, said to be that of the warrior Velorn, that hangs on one wall of the local council hall.

A portable hole was recently discovered on the inside surface of the shield; within it was a treasure map. The council is now debating what to do about this. The present whereabouts of the map, and what else might be "in" the shield (still hanging on the wall) is not publicly known.

❑

Races of Cerilia

Halfling Guilders, Dwarven Kings, and Elven Princes

by Rich Baker

Welcome to Cerilia, the newest AD&D® game world and home of the BIRTHRIGHT™: The Legacy of Kings campaign setting. In the BIRTHRIGHT setting, any player character can choose to be a king or ruler of some kind. Even as a 1st level character, your PC may be the Great Patriarch of a temple, the mysterious court wizard, or the shadowy guildmaster who builds his empire from silk and gold.

There is a great literary tradition for this "top-down" look at a fantasy world. Four of the nine members of Tolkien's Fellowship of the Ring are titled nobles. Michael Moorcock's Eternal Champions include princes, dukes, counts, and even an emperor. And even the more recent works of Terry Brooks or David Eddings build "character parties" out of kings and princes. The BIRTHRIGHT campaign setting finally brings this aspect of fantasy literature to the AD&D game.

From this basic idea, an entire campaign world unfolded. When Colin McComb and I were assigned the task of making this single premise into a living, breathing world, we spent weeks in fevered discussions trying to determine how to make it work and how to make the setting itself distinct. What was new and different about Cerilia, besides the fact that the players would control the fortunes of great empires? How would the art and mood clearly show that this was Cerilia, and not Toril or Oerth? For part of our solution, we fell back on an old world-builders' trick: We took the "standard" AD&D character races and added our own new twists.

Of course, that wasn't the only piece of design work we did to bring Cerilia to life, but it was certainly one of the major building blocks of the world. In this article you'll get a sneak preview of the extraordinary races and cultures of Cerilia, as well as a representative NPC of each of these peoples. This month, we look at the demihuman races: dwarves, elves, half-elves, and halflings. Next month we'll preview the various human cultures of the island-continent of Cerilia. So read on and enjoy!

Dwarves

The dwarves are an ancient race, far older than humankind and possibly as old as the elves. For thousands of years, their stone cities have stood in the high mountains of Cerilia. Since the coming of mankind, the fortunes of the dwarven race have declined, but the mountains are still home to strong fortresses where the dwarven ways are kept alive.

Cerilian dwarves are closely tied to the earth and rock of their homes, not only spiritually, but in a real physiological sense. Like the great stone giants, dwarven flesh resembles mountain heartrock. Their skin is gray and cool to the touch, and they are nearly twice as dense as a human. A typical dwarf can weigh as much as 300 pounds, despite his small stature. A dwarf's hair ranges from black to iron gray, and their eyes are dark as chips of obsidian.

Like the dwarves of many worlds, Cerilian dwarves are miners and smiths of unparalleled skill. Their weapons and armor are unequalled in all Cerilia. They have an immense capacity for toil and hardship, and can work at a pace that would kill humans or elves. While dwarves are capable of monumental labor, they approach their tasks with light hearts and deep, rolling songs. There's always time for a mug of ale and a good story, and when the work is done, dwarves throw themselves into revelry with surprising wit and mirth.

Cerilian dwarves have the standard underground detection abilities of the standard AD&D dwarf, and have infravision to a range of 90 feet. They have no special bonus to attack certain monsters, but instead gain a general +1 to attacks with any kind of axe or hammer, the favored weapons of their race. They have no special skill at fighting giants, but they do gain a –2 bonus to AC while fighting orogs, ogres, and trolls. Dwarves resist magic and poison as described in the *Player's Handbook.*

The unusual density of the dwarven frame protects dwarves from some kinds of attacks; they suffer only half damage from bludgeoning, crushing, or constricting. Dwarves also gain a special +4 bonus to their Strength scores (count each percentage bracket of an 18 as one point) for encumbrance purposes only; a dwarf who weighs 300 pounds and is used to carrying that around doesn't mind another hundred or so for arms, armor, and gear.

Elves

Immortal beings of grace and mystery, elves (or *Sidhelien*) have dwelled in Cerilia's forests and glens for uncounted years. Their soaring towers were scattered through Cerilia like diadems on a green sea when the world was young, before men came to Cerilia. In the blink of an elven eye, their kingdoms were swept away by a torrent of human invaders, and many elves still consider humans their mortal enemies. Elven forests are perilous for human travellers.

Elves are tall and slight of build, ranging from five to six feet in height. They move with an easy, inhuman grace and have clear, beautiful faces. Their voices are melodious and perfect, with a mesmerizing quality to them. The lands of the elves are timeless and mystical; a mortal visitor might believe that he passed only a single night with the elves, and then return to human lands to find that a dozen years went by, or even no time at all. The ways of elves are not for humans to understand.

Elven hearts are often unfathomable to folk of other races. They are capable of towering rage, dark melancholy, and wild delight. They can shift from mood to mood on a whim or a single word. Elves love things of beauty, and they build their cities to enhance the surroundings rather than replace them. They love to dress in finery of dazzling elegance and quality; even the most common elf dresses like a human lord.

Cerilian elves are true immortals, who never die unless slain by weapon or mischance. They do not possess infravision, but they can see by starlight or moonlight as well as a human sees by day. Elves resist *sleep*

and *charm* as described in the *Player's Handbook,* and they also cannot be affected by aging attacks or normal disease—only magical diseases such as lycanthropy or mummy rot can harm them. Elves don't need to sleep, but they can become physically exhausted and must rest quietly, studying spells or standing watch, for about as long as a human needs to sleep.

Cerilian elves have no ability to detect secret doors or concealed objects, but they retain their ability to surprise opponents when alone. An elf has no special attack bonuses, but all elves *pass without trace* in natural settings and ignore ground characteristics when they move or march—an elf can move over heavy snow, soft sand, or a treacherous mountainside as easily as a human walks across a level surface.

Cerilian elves can choose to be of any non-lawful alignment; it's just not in their nature to place the values of society above the freedom of the individual.

Half-Elves

From time to time, a particularly beautiful human with courage and grace can walk among the *Sidhelien* and return unscathed. Some few humans have been accepted as equals in the elven courts. Mortals, however, quickly become lost in the elven spell. The years reel by in splendor and celebration, while the world outside comes to a halt or leaps centuries ahead. More often than not, their lives run out in an eyeblink, like moths dancing too close to the flame.

Half-elves are the children of these unusual men and women and their elven hosts. The elves regard them as *Sidhelien,* and they're welcome in elven society. Humans are more suspicious of half-elves, referring to them as bewitched or changelings. It is rare for half-elves to leave the elven woods.

Like elves, half-elves are beautiful and graceful, but they are well within the human ranges of height and weight. Half-elves have a 30% resistance to *sleep* and *charm* spells or effects, and a 30% resistance to disease or aging attacks. They share their elven parent's night vision, but have to sleep as much as a normal human. Elven blood can manifest for several generations after a half-elf is born; the grandchildren or even great-grandchildren of a human-elf match may qualify as half-elves, depending on the individual.

Halflings

The halflings aren't a numerous people, but they can be found almost anywhere humans live. Only a handful of humans know the secret of the halflings' origins: Once they dwelled in the spirit-world, a realm of faerie enchantment that existed parallel to Cerilia. They were known as halflings because they were half of this world, and half of another. Many centuries ago, this realm was poisoned by the rise of the Shadow Lord, and the halflings fled to the daylight world to escape his power.

Living in the shadow of their larger neighbors, halflings don't see the sense in a government larger than a small village or extended family, and are happy to count themselves citizens of whatever human land surrounds them. It's not unusual to find a handful of halfling farmers near a human village, or a neighborhood of halfling craftsmen in a larger town. They usually adopt the language, culture, and customs of the Big Folk around them, while keeping a few aspects of their own culture intact. For example, they will never take up arms against each other—halflings feel free to use weapons in the defense of their homes or families, but consider fisticuffs the only acceptable form of violence against other halflings.

Cerilian halflings stand about three feet tall, and resemble small humans. They tend to be plump, and are fond of creature comforts. They resist poison and magic as described in the *Player's Handbook*, and gain a +1 bonus to hit with slings and thrown missile weapons due to their steady hands and sharp eyes. They can surprise opponents, but no halfling has infravision or the mining detection abilities associated with Stouts in the *Players Handbook.*

Halflings still retain their ancestors' connection to Cerilia's parallel world, and they can see into the Shadow Land by concentrating for one round. This allows them to detect evil, undead, or necromantic magic with a 75% chance of success. Halflings may also note places where the barriers between worlds are thin, using their innate power to either dimension door or shadow walk up to three times per week. Their chance of success depends on the closeness of the Shadow Land, ranging from 10% on sunny summer days in civilized regions to 90% or more on cold winter nights in wild areas or crypts. Halflings avoid revealing the extent of these abilities to people they don't know well.

Table 1: Racial Ability Requirements

Ability	Dwarf	Elf	Half-Elf	Halfling
Strength	13/18	5/18	4/18	3/18
Dexterity	3/16	6/18	6/18	10/18
Constitution	13/18	6/18	3/18	8/18
Intelligence	3/18	8/18	6/18	6/18
Wisdom	3/18	3/18	3/18	6/18
Charisma	3/17	10/18	6/18	3/18

Character Class and Race

If your character meets the minimum scores and you decide that he is a member of that particular race, your character's scores will be adjusted by the Racial Ability Adjustments listed in Table 2, below:

Table 2: Racial Ability Adjusments

Race	Adjustments
Dwarf	+2 Constitution, -2 Dexterity
Elf	+1 Dex, +1 Int, -1 Con, -1 Str
Half-Elf	+1 Dexterity, -1 Constitution
Halfling	+1 Dex, +1 Wis, -2 Strength

Cerilian demihumans are limited in their maximum level advancement, as described in the *Player's Handbook*. However, the exact classes allowed and limits are slightly different to reflect the unique history and background of Cerilia.

Table 3: Racial Level Limits

Class	Dwarf	Elf	Half-Elf	Halfling
Fighter	15	12	14	7
Paladin	–	–	–	–
Ranger	–	12	16	7
Priest	12	–	9	8
Mage	–	U	12	–
Thief	8	12	12	U
Bard	–	9	U	–

◆ Dwarves may also be multi-classed fighter/priests or fighter/thieves.

◆ Elves may be multi-classed fighter/mages, fighter/thieves, or thief/mages.

◆ Half-elves may be multi-classed fighter/mages, fighter/thieves, fighter/priests, thief/mages, and priest/thieves.

◆ Halflings may be multi-classed fighter/thieves or ranger/priests.

The White Spears

Now that we've introduced the hard-and-fast rules for Cerilian characters, let's take a look at a couple of examples. About eight weeks ago, the mercenary company known as the White Spears was betrayed to its enemies and destroyed at the Battle of Sacred Crossing. The White Spears had been hired by an ambitious nobleman by the name of Count Beval Doried, a vassal of the Baron of Ghoere. Unfortunately, they didn't know that Doried planned to use them as a provocation for war between Mhoried and Ghoere. By ensuring that the White Spears were caught, he hoped to push tensions between the two realms to the breaking point.

The surviving White Spears are outlaws and highwaymen in the kingdom of Mhoried, where they were defeated, but Doried has washed his hands of the matter and declared them outlaws in Ghoere as well. Two of the survivors, the dwarven warrior Tharkazik Durkummal and the elven scout Caelcormac Siebhellagh, managed to escape the search mounted by the Knights-Guardian of Mhoried and found shelter with the halfling guildmaster Sorenna Medaerne.

Tharkazik Durkummal
Male Dwarf, 5th level Fighter, N

Str:	17 (18/76)	HP: 48
Dex:	7	AC: 0
Con:	18	THAC0: 16
Int:	10	#AT: 1 (3/2)
Wis:	12	Dmg: By wpn +1
Chr:	13	

Notes: Warhammer specialist

Items: Dwarven plate mail, *shield +1, war hammer +2,* heavy leather boots, broad leather belt, wool cloak, belt pouch, dagger, light crossbow, 12 bolts, *elixir of health*

Tharkazik (or Thar, to his friends) is a dwarven sellsword who has crisscrossed Cerilia several times with various mercenary bands and adventuring groups. Thar wasn't always a mercenary; as a young dwarf, he was apprenticed to a master bladesmith named Beraggul near the dwarven city of Daikar Zhigun. Three years ago, a band of gnollish marauders in the service of Grabentod attacked and destroyed his mentor's forge and home, leaving Thar for dead.

When he awoke, Thar buried Beraggul and his family, and set off on the gnolls' trail. He found that the gnolls were only one party of scouts and pillagers in a bitter war of raiding and skirmishing that raged through northeast Brechtür. Thar decided to sign on with the mercenary company known as the White Spears, hoping for the chance to track down and confront the gnolls who had raided Beraggul's forge. The White Spears never met those particular gnolls, but they encountered many others, and Thar exacted his vengeance from them.

When hostilities cooled in Brechtür, the White Spears took ship to the heartlands of Anuire, where their services were retained by Count Doried of Ghoere. By this time, Thar had a number of friends among the mercenaries, and he was beginning to enjoy the life of a wandering soldier. Doried hired the White Spear company to raid across the border into Mhoried and harass the Mhor by burning crops and sacking villages wherever they could.

Thar soon found that he had little taste for this violent and cruel work, and prepared to leave the company. However, before he could set off on his own, the White Spears were cornered by a powerful force of Mhoried's Knights-Guardian, and in the pitched battle that followed, the mercenaries were scattered to the winds. Thar barely escaped with his life, accompanied by only two of his closest companions from the company.

Today, Thar is a penniless criminal. He intends to return to Daikar Zhigun someday, but his homeland is far away, and he is a wanted criminal in both Mhoried and Ghoere.

illustration by Ellisa Mitchell

Caelcormac Siebhellagh
Male Elf, 6th level Fighter/7th level Thief, CN

Str:	15	HP: 29
Dex:	17	AC: 2
Con:	12	THAC0: 15
Int:	13	#AT: 1
Wis:	10	Dmg: by wpn
Cha:	15	

Bloodline: Brenna, minor, 16

Blood Abilities: Alertness

Items: Elven chain mail, *long sword +1,* long bow, 24 sheaf arrows, leather boots, leather belt, fine linen tunic and breeches, belt pouch, scroll of protection from undead.

Notes: PP 35; OL 30; F/RT 40; MS 75; HS 75; CW 95; DN 35; RL 15.

Caelcormac is a young elf of only three hundred years, who left his home forests of Tuarhievel ten years ago to see the rest of Cerilia. While it's not unusual for elves to be moved to action by impulses that other creatures might disregard, it is very unusual for any motivation to be so sound or long-lasting as Cael's wanderlust. He has walked Cerilia from shore to shore, and he still hungers to see what's over the next rise or beyond the next river.

The son of an elven noblewoman, Cael possesses a small measure of royal blood. He is a scion of Brenna, although he does not advertise this fact. From this bloodline he derives unnatural alertness (he can only be surprised on a roll of 1). The Siebhellagh line is of some importance in Tuarhiviel, and Cael's wanderlust has often put him at odds with the rest of his family.

Cael is tall and lean, even for an elf, and his angular features are full of an open-eyed wonder that is unusual for his kind. Whereas many elves possess an air of immortal wisdom, Caelcormac exudes insatiable curiosity. He is irrepressibly good-natured, with a great love of clever humor (and sarcasm) that occasionally gets him into trouble. Cael knows few of the dark melancholic moods that often trouble his kind, and sometimes seems almost unhinged with his boundless energy and optimism.

Despite his generally easy-going nature, Cael is basically a self-centered individual who thinks of his own entertainment and welfare first. He'll change a plan or an allegiance on a whim, and this lack of loyalty has led him to the life of a mercenary scout. When his carefree ways reduced him to poverty four years ago, he signed on with the White Spear band. There, he befriended Thar, and the two of them stuck together after the band was scattered by Mhoried's Guardians.

Sorenna Medaerne
Female Halfling, 4th level Thief/4th level Priest, NG
Guilder of the Ruimache Coster

Str:	7	HP: 29
Dex:	16	AC: 3
Con:	10	THAC0: 19
Int:	13	#AT: 1
Wis:	15	Dmg: by wpn
Cha:	12	

Bloodline: Basaia, minor, 14

Blood Abilities: Detect illusion

Items: Silenced chain mail shirt, short sword and dagger of quality (+1 to attack rolls), light crossbow, 20 bolts, wool tunic and skirt, embroidered tabard, belt pouch, 2 vials holy water

Notes: PP 50; OL 45; F/RT 50; MS 20; HS 40; CW 60; DN 20; RL 5.

Spells Memorized: 1) *animal friendship, cure light wounds* (x2), *protection from evil, sanctuary;* 2) *aid, charm person or mammal, speak with animals*

Halflings are not very demonstrative with their faiths, but they can be extremely pious and devout individuals. Sorenna is an excellent example of a halfling priestess. She is actually a guildmaster and merchant of some importance in the Mhorien city of Ruimache, but she also serves as the spiritual guide to the halflings of her community. As the leader of both a small trade guild and a small temple, Sorenna is a regent, or a character who collects power for her domain of businesses and congregations.

Sorenna is not an impressive individual at first glance. She stands a shade over three feet in height, and she does not flaunt her wealth or prestige with fine dress or noble airs. She is simply a plain, earnest woman with surprising strength of will and insight. It takes a few minutes for a stranger speaking with Sorenna to realize that he is dealing with a person of importance.

Sorenna's domain consists of temple and guild holdings in Ruimache and the surrounding lands. The Ruimache Coster is a union of wool and livestock buyers with investments in several other businesses; most of Mhoried's sizable wool harvest passes through their hands before being sold down the Maesil to other cities of the Anuirean heartland. The Coster fronts a small thieves' guild that works very carefully to stay unseen; Sorenna believes that thievery is called for only when it's the only way to force someone to deal fairly.

The Open Hearth of Abhaghnallie (the true halfling name for Avanalae) consists of a small temple to the patroness of the small folk in the center of Ruimache's halfling district, plus a few small shrines in the countryside. Sorenna's human neighbors barely recognize the fact that her influence is so widespread; the halfling businessmen and lesser priests who are under Sorenna's command simply do not do anything to make themselves stand out.

Sorenna recently agreed to smuggle Thar and Cael out of Mhoried through Ruimache's waterfront. Her various contacts have provided her with enough information to piece together a Ghoeran conspiracy to provoke a war with Mhoried, and the betrayal of the White Spear company is the last piece of the puzzle. Therefore, Sorenna is delaying the two mercenaries while she tries to deduce the role the White Spears were to play. In the meantime, she has also learned that Ghoeran agents are working to clean up the loose ends that Thar and Cael represent. Sorenna has little reason to aid any Ghoeran plots, and she hopes that she can use the two adventurers to expose Ghoere's machinations.

Next month, we will feature the different human cultures of Cerilia!

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LIVING JUNGLE™ Q&A

Errata for Malatran Heroes

Since the debut of the LIVING JUNGLE™ campaign in POLYHEDRON® Newszine #102, questions about the setting have flooded into HQ. This article recaps questions already covered in the Letters column and reviews others which have come up since.

Character Creation

Several errors appeared on the LIVING JUNGLE Character Creation Guidelines of issue #102. These errors have been corrected in later reprintings, but here is a quick overview:

• Under the listing of Classes Available, paladins are also unavailable.

• The MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM® sheet for the Tam'hi states they can be priests and warrior/priests, but the Character Class Limits chart says they cannot. Tam'hi *can* be priests up to 5th level.

• A mage hero starts the game with five fetishes instead of the stated four, one for each spell.

• The witch doctor is not a class available to LIVING JUNGLE heroes. This is an NPC class only. Shamans and priests are considered clerics across the Malatran plain, while witch doctors are an enigmatic group of powerful and rare magic practitioners.

• Priests have access to all major spell spheres listed in the *Player's Handbook*. Spells from the *Tome of Magic* or other sources are not allowed at this time.

• Some multi-class options were not covered in the MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM® entries. See the table below for the full range of multi-class options.

• The **seamanship** proficiency was presented in the adventures in some of the early LIVING JUNGLE events. Since this is not currently a proficiency usable by LJ heroes, and there is no other water-based skill, we've replaced this skill with **boating**. This skill, and all other proficiencies, will be covered in the next article in this issue.

Other Errata

In addition to oversights on our part, many Network members have asked interesting questions that we did not foresee.

• Katanga heroes do not gain a Dexterity bonus when in biped or animal form. The armor class of this form already takes into account the creature's hide and agility when in these forms. However, they do receive a Dexterity bonus when in human form. Saru characters, on the other hand, do receive an AC bonus for Dexterity.

• All races of the LIVING JUNGLE share a language in the common tongue of the Nubari. However, the ape-like origins of the saru force them to spend two non-weapon proficiency slots to learn Common. Tribes created by Network members can have their own Nubari dialect, but a proficiency slot must be allocated to this new language.

• Tribes outlined in issue #102 have special weapon bonuses for their members. However, these weapon bonuses *must* still follow class restrictions. For example: a cleric or mage may not fight with a spear even though they receive the proficiency for free. This rule contradicts benefits for the Rudra tribe, staying within the core rule restrictions.

• Katanga characters can be any size which fits into their size category, as noted on the MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM sheets in issue #102. They can vary in size within that limitation (different species of monkey for example), but gain no special game abilities.

Frequently Asked Questions

Why can't you specialize in rock throwing? As stated in issue #103, no character can specialize in "rock." The shape and weight of a rock varies from stone to stone, making each projectile a different size and shape. Specialization in a weapon is based on a hero's experience and knowledge of a weapon's balance and form. Rocks come in a variety of different shapes, sizes, and weights, none of which are consistent.

Why can't wilderness races like the jungle tam'hi and the tiger katanga be rangers? Since several non-human races have special abilities and powers, certain restrictions need to apply to hero classes. If the tiger katanga had many more advantages than other races, there would be fewer benefits to being Nubari or other races.

Are hero points an award for finishing the adventure? Hero points are not a reward for a successful adventure. Judges should remember that hero points are *only* to be handed out for brave and courageous actions.

Can a judge make up a certificate for items found in an adventure? Unusual treasure found in LIVING JUNGLE events, be it magical or mundane, must have an official certificate. Heroes cannot simply use their skills to find items of value in events unless individually specified. Judges <u>are not</u> empowered to create their own treasure certificates. All item verifications must be supplied by HQ within the event.

What are some of the other things that do not exist in Malatra? The following items are some of the things which <u>do not</u> exist in the LIVING JUNGLE: lycanthropy, potion miscibility, metal, a stan-

Demi-Human Multi-Class Options

Korobokuru: fighter/cleric, fighter/thief
Katanga: fighter/mage, fighter/thief, fighter/cleric, mage/ thief
Tam'hi: fighter/mage, fighter/thief, mage/thief, fighter/cleric
Shu: fighter/thief
Saru: fighter/thief

dard of currency, true gods, and contact with races outside the Malatran plateau. Other items may appear in future errata.

Are katanga affected by a hold person *spell?* Although they are described as an intelligent race of shape-changing animals, katanga are susceptible to the effects of spells such as *charm* and *hold person*. Katanga are considered demi-humans for the purposes of all spell effects. Consequently, they are immune to the effects of spells such as *charm mammal* or *hold animal.*

Certain items have a gold piece value on the prize certificates. I thought the LIVING JUNGLE *did have a form of currency?* Certain item certificates have a relative value in gold pieces listed. Since the LIVING JUNGLE has no form of currency, this amount is a rough standard to be used in the bartering of items. This standard should be used for comparison only.

What are the height, weight, and age factors of Living Jungle races? Because of space limitations, this information was left out of issue #102. It is, however, presented here.

Who may participate in LIVING JUNGLE *events?* Only current members of the RPGA® Network may play in LIVING JUNGLE game events.

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illustration by Jim Holloway

Height & Weight

	Height in Inches		Weight in Pounds	
Race	**Base**	**Modifier**	**Base**	**Modifier**
Korobokuru	50/48	1d10	110/100	3d12
Katanga	60/58	2d6	115/95	3d12
Tam'hi	55/50	1d12	90/70	3d10
Nubari	60/59	2d10	140/100	6d10
Shoo	32/30	2d8	52/48	5d4
Saru	50/50	2d10	260/220	6d10

Age

Race	**Starting Age**	**Maximum Age**	**Middle Age**	**Old Age**	**Venerable**
Korobokuru	20 + 1d10	100 + (3d10)	45 yrs	80yrs	125 yrs
Katanga	19 + 1d8	70 + (2d10)	40 yrs	60 yrs	95 yrs
Tam'hi	35 + 1d10	200 + (3d10)	60 yrs	170 yrs	230 yrs
Nubari	15 + 1d4	90 + (2d20)	45 yrs	60 yrs	95 yrs
Shoo	17 + 1d6	75 + (2d10)	30 yrs	55 yrs	80 yrs
Saru	15 + 1d3	90 + (2d20)	45 yrs	60 yrs	95 yrs

JUNGLE LORE

New Proficiencies for LIVING JUNGLE™ Heroes

by Kevin Melka

When the LIVING JUNGLE campaign was created a year ago, the proficiencies available to heroes were limited to those found in the *Player's Handbook*. Following the campaign's success at the WINTER FANTASY™ convention and other events across the country, the next logical step is to broaden rules for character generation to better reflect this unique setting. After reviewing existing proficiencies in the *Player's Handbook* and other skills presented in *The Complete Handbooks,* HQ has come up with a list of new and revised skills for LIVING JUNGLE heroes.

Grandfathering

Members who have created a LIVING JUNGLE character before the publication of this material may wish to change their proficiencies to reflect this information. This is acceptable; however, slots can only be exchanged on a one-to-one basis. This affects non-weapon proficiencies only. Any new proficiencies developed in the future will only apply to new characters. Grandfathering too much leads to confusion about what is available to heroes.

Clarifications

At present, no LIVING JUNGLE hero may begin play with the following proficiencies (this list is expanded from the original list): agriculture, ancient history, armorer, blacksmithing, carpentry, charioteering, cobbling, engineering, forgery, gem cutting, heraldry, mining, navigation, reading/writing, riding (airborne & land-based), seamanship, stonemasonry, and weaponsmithing.

The following skills found in the *Player's Handbook* have special clarifications (see below) for the LIVING JUNGLE campaign: bowyer/fletcher, languages (modern), local history, religion, spellcraft, and survival.

Bowyer/Fletcher: Heroes with this skill can fashion only short bows. In addition, only one arrow can be constructed in a day instead of 1d6. This is because arrow heads in Malatra are carved from stone. Heroes can still fashion 1d6 arrow shafts per day.

Languages (Modern): This skill should be considered tribal or racial instead of modern. Heroes wanting to learn a new language must still follow any racial restrictions or modifiers (ie. saru must spend two slots to learn a spoken language).

Local History: This skill should be considered tribal history, detailing traditions and geographical customs of a tribe or area. Heroes without a tribe cannot have this proficiency.

Religion: Since there are no deities in Malatra, this skill is used to identify good, neutral, or evil rites and customs. Use of this skill will also identify the alignment of a priest whenever a spell is cast or belief is practiced.

Spellcraft: Use of this skill will identify an unknown spell fetish or help repair a damaged one. The skill will also allow a hero to identify an unknown spell or spell-like ability. This skill does not allow a hero to create a spell fetish.

Survival: This skill gives a hero the basic knowledge needed to survive in a certain area of the Malatran plateau. The four types of survival available to heroes are: jungle, savanna, water, and mountain. Water survival applies to any area near a river or lake. Territories such as the Black Plains and the swamps of Malatra are unknown to the tribes of the land.

New Skills

Alertness: A hero with this proficiency has an instinctive knack for noticing disturbances and discrepancies in the immediate vicinity. A successful use of this skill reduces the hero's chance of being surprised by 1.

Animal Rending: Heroes with this skill are experts in skinning and butchering animal carcasses. This allows the hero to derive the maximum amount of food from a carcass and harvest valuable products from it without damaging it. Such products typically

New Living Jungle Proficiencies

Proficiency	Slots	Ability	Modifier	Avail. Class
Alertness	1	Wis	+1	All
Animal Rending	1	Dex	+2	All
Bartering	2	Int	-1	Wizard, Priest
Boasting	1	Wis	-2	Warrior, Rogue
Boating	1	Wis	+1	All
Danger Sense	2	Wis	-1	All
Foraging	1	Int	-2	All
Hiding	2	Int	-2	All
Intimidation	1	Str/Cha	0	All
Light Sleeping	1	Con	-1	Warrior, Rogue
Lore	3	Wis	-2	Wizard, Priest
Signaling	1	Int	-1	All
Sign Language	1	Dex	0	All
Somatic Concealment	1	Dex	-1	Wizard, Priest
Sound Imitation	2	Wis	-2	All
Taunting	1	Wis	-1	Rogue
Trail Marking	1	Wis	0	Warrior, Rogue
Vine Swinging	1	Dex	-2	All
Weapon Improvisation	1	Wis	-2	Warrior, Rogue, Priest
Weapon Prowess	1	Dex	-1	Warrior

include furs, horns, teeth, and hides.

No proficiency checks are necessary to butcher most animals, but the DM may require checks in unusual situations. For example, a check may be required to butcher an animal the hero has never seen before, or to successfully harvest a delicate body part (say an eye or a tooth).

This skill does not allow the hero to obtain special and unique items, such as things that would require an official treasure certificate. Harvested items are typically returned to the tribe where craftsmen prepare them for the tribe's benefit. However, heroes bringing such items back to their tribe may earn special favors or other rewards—such as items from the character creation equipment list.

Bartering: This skill allows a hero to appraise the worth of an item in relation to other objects presented for trade. This proficiency does not work in conjunction with magical items or artifacts unknown to the hero.

The DM makes this proficiency check in secret. If the check fails, the hero gains no special information to help him with a trade. Successful use of this skill allows a hero to gain the upper hand in any trading situation. If both sides of a trade possess bartering, the character making the check by the most gains the upper hand in the trade. This skill only works with NPCs and not with other player characters.

Boating: This skill allows a hero to pilot small boats, canoes, rafts, or other water craft. A successful proficiency check is necessary to pilot craft at maximum speed or to execute difficult maneuvers. Heroes may not take this proficiency unless there is a river or lake within 10 miles of their native tribe.

Danger Sense: This skill provides the hero with a sixth sense that warns him of impending danger. When the hero is one round away from triggering a threat, the DM makes a secret proficiency check. If the check fails, the hero senses nothing. If the check is successful, the hero feels a tingling in the back of his neck and senses the general direction of the threat. Heroes who have detected an impending ambush are not surprised and gain automatic initiative on the first round of combat.

Foraging: Use of this skill allows the hero to locate a desired substance in a certain area—such as a medicinal herb, a bird's egg, or a source of water. The hero must search for 2d4 hours in an area where the material is theoretically available (the material must be able to be found in that area). The DM is the final judge as to whether an item can be found in a certain area, and doesn't reveal this information until after the hero completes their search.

Hiding: This proficiency allows a hero to use natural surroundings to conceal himself. Like the survival proficiency, there are four types of hiding: jungle, savanna, water, and mountains. A successful check mean the hero has disappeared from view. The hidden hero must remain motionless and completely silent to prevent discovery.

The hero stays hidden unless a creature or NPC searching for them makes a successful Intelligence check. This skill has no effect on creatures who can detect prey with senses other than sight.

Intimidation: This ability allows a hero to bend another to his will through fear tactics. Potential victims of intimidation must make a saving throw versus fear or they will likely do as they're told. They are also likely to harbor great resentment against the hero, keeping their dislike hidden until the first opportunity to avenge their pride arises.

Intimidation can be attempted with either Strength or Charisma. Strength indicates a threat of immediate bodily injury, while Charisma uses more subtle threats which need not be physical. Player characters are never required to submit to intimidation.

Light Sleeping: This proficiency lets a hero receive the benefits of a full night's sleep from a one-hour nap. The hero must make a proficiency check before going to sleep. If the check succeeds, the hero wakes in an hour fully refreshed—recovering the same amount of hit points as if he had rested a full night. If the check fails, the hero remains asleep, awakening as usual. The hero may use this skill once per week, regardless of whether it fails or succeeds.

This proficiency is not effective for purposes of spell memorization.

Lore: Possessors of this skill are versed in the ancient legends and myths that permeate Malatra. This proficiency does not extend to the time of the Ancients, only the period since they disappeared from the plateau. This skill can be used to identify a notable item, strange behavior in animals, a historical period in time, or a dilemma which has befallen the LIVING JUNGLE before. A second check is required if the hero wishes to learn how to correct the dilemma.

Lore is a skill which must be chosen during the creation of a LIVING JUNGLE character (or during the period of grandfathering associated with this article), as it takes years of study under a loremaster or witch doctor to amass this knowledge.

Signaling: Heroes with this skill can send and receive messages at long distances. A specific method of signaling must be designated, such as drums, smoke signals, or whistling. Additional slots may be spent to learn additional methods. Both sender and receiver must know the same method, and both checks must be successful for the message to be understood. If either side fails their check, the message is either sent or interpreted incorrectly. Messages can be sent and received at the rate of 10 words per round.

Sign Language: A hero with this skill can communicate through the use of hand gestures instead of speech. There are many different types of sign language across the Malatran plateau, each indigenous to a different tribe. This skill developed when hunters stalking prey needed to communicate silently, so as not to alert prey to their presence.

For two heroes to communicate with sign language, both must know the same style of sign being used. Sign language is different enough from tribe to tribe to make mixing of two styles impossible.

A hero with this skill may also try to convey simple messages to another hero without the skill. The message must be basic, such as "Don't move," "Follow me," or "Get down." Complicated phrases or those containing pronouns are unacceptable, such as "My name is Took," or "This is Fire Mountain." If the DM deems the phrase unacceptable, the sign language cannot be attempted—no proficiency check is necessary. If the DM allows the phrase, the hero makes a check.

Somatic Concealment: Since users of magic tend to be feared in Malatra, the art of casting spells without others noticing the action has developed. A

hero must announce to the DM the intention of using this skill at the beginning of the round. When the spell is cast, the DM makes the roll in secret. A successful check indicates the casting of the spell has gone unnoticed—not recognizing the gestures as being magical in nature. A failed check means that all those viewing the wizard see their movements for what they really are.

Sound Imitation: Heroes with this skill can mimic the sounds of various creatures of the land—bird calls, monkey screams, and other natural animal sounds. A successful check indicates the imitation is good enough to fool other animals.

Taunting: This proficiency enables a hero to taunt, goad, or annoy an enemy. If the check is successful, the opponent is allowed a saving throw versus paralyzation, or he will become enraged and concentrate his anger on the hero. An enraged foe receives a -2 attack penalty, +1 to damage, and a -1 penalty to their armor class.

Taunted opponents are often so blinded by rage they fail to notice small details (such as trip wires or covered pits). NPCs or creatures with a Wisdom of 14 or more are immune to this effect, as are enemies who are five or more levels higher than the hero. Player characters are immune to the effects of taunting.

Trail Marking: By notching trees, scattering pebbles, piling stones, and clipping weeds, a hero can mark a trail through any wilderness area. Heroes attempting this skill must move at 2/3 their normal movement rate, marking the trail as they move along.

Successful use of this proficiency allows a hero to backtrack their trail for a number of miles equal to their level. For example, a 3rd level warrior marks a trail for 12 miles. The first successful check enables him to follow the trail back three miles, and three more successful checks are needed to follow the trail back to the beginning. If any of the checks fail, the trail is lost.

Vine Swinging: Heroes with this skill can swing from vines that grow throughout the jungle, never touching the ground. A hero can swing from one vine to the next per level of experience before having to make another check to continue. DM may apply penalties to the rolls depending on the conditions (such as recent rain or lack of numerous trees).

This skill cannot be used where there is not a thick growth of trees, such as savannas or mountains. Saru and monkey katanga gain a bonus of +2 to all vine swinging proficiency checks.

illustration by Jim Holloway

Weapon Improvisation: With this proficiency a hero can improvise a weapon from natural materials. An area must be searched for 1d6 rounds, then the proficiency check is made. If the check fails, the hero finds nothing and must try again in a different area. If the check succeeds, the hero finds an object that can be wielded as a club—such as a branch or a bone.

The improvised weapon inflicts 1d6 points of damage to man-sized or smaller creatures, and 1d3 points to large creatures—plus any Strength or other bonuses. If maximum damage is done with this weapon, it must make a saving throw versus crushing blow or shatter after delivering its damage. Improvised weapons last only to the end of the adventure in which they were found, and are not considered permanent equipment.

Weapon Prowess: Heroes with this skill can put on an impressive display of weapon prowess without fighting. A hero must use a weapon in which they are proficient, and weapon specialization has no additional effect. The "show" takes at least one round to display, and those who are impressed (see below) must make a morale check.

Not everyone will be swayed by weapon prowess. This skill may be useful against a single NPC opponent, but would do nothing against a mob of angry villagers. Viewers of this display must be intelligent and be of an equal or lower experience level to be affected.

Opponents who fail their morale check are awed by the display, and will act in a manner suited to the circumstances at hand. If the viewer was about to engage in combat with the hero, they may suddenly back down or flee. If the opponents are forced to attack, the DM may give them a -1 penalty to all rolls. If the situation is non-violent, NPCs who fail their check will regard the hero as if their Charisma has been increased by 1d6 points (not to exceed 18).

The hero must state he is using this skill during a non-combat round. The DM then makes the roll in secret, explaining the results based on success or failure. Success may bring results as explained above, while failure could provoke an enemy (proving to them the hero cannot wield his weapon properly) or cause NPCs to regard the hero less seriously.

❑

What's So Bad About the Dark Side?

The Ethical Dilemma of Force-Users

by Lester Smith

Lightsaber flaring, Fahjay kicked the door open and leapt into the room. A half dozen meters to his left, one terrorist stood at a control panel, reaching for the switch that would blow the city's power grid, killing thousands of innocent civilians. A half dozen meters to his right, another terrorist held a vibroknife at Admiral Ackbar's fleshy throat. "Which will it be, Jedi?" the knife wielder taunted. "Do you save the city, or Ackbar's sorry hide?"

Lowering his lightsaber, Fahjay closed his eyes and reached out through the Force. He gave a telekinetic tug, and the knife leapt from the one terrorist's hand, flashed across the room, and buried itself to the hilt in the other terrorist's chest. As the dead man tumbled away from the control panel, Ackbar wrestled his assailant to the floor.

"Fahjay gets a Dark Side point for that," the GM said.

"Why?" the player protested. "It was a heroic action, and it saved thousands of lives—Ackbar's included."

"But the rule book says that using telekinesis to injure incurs a Dark Side point. Sorry, I don't make the rules; I just enforce them."

One problem involved in designing role-playing games lies in deciding how much to rely upon rules to convey a genre, and how much to trust to players' sense of the spirit of the setting. That isn't as easy a decision as it might seem. On the one hand, the hobby has been moving steadily toward fewer hard-and-fast rules in RPGs, and toward more reliance upon the players' feel for drama. On the other hand, even the most seasoned of role-players need at least some structure for their gaming. And heaven help the novice game master trying to run an adventure with a group of disputatious players and a vaguely worded set of rules.

The vignette above provides a good example of why structure—a rules system—is important. From the standpoint of the player, Fahjay has done nothing wrong; indeed, he has turned a no-win situation into a complete victory. Had he moved to save Admiral Ackbar first, the terrorist at the control panel would have had time to explode the power grid. But had he dealt with that threat first, Admiral Ackbar would have been murdered. Faced with a choice between the two, he drew upon the power of the Force to inventively use the one threat to negate the other. It is a dramatic solution, so why is Fahjay being punished for it? It can't be due to the death of the one terrorist, because cutting him in half with the lightsaber would not have incurred the same penalty, while even merely injuring him with the telekinetically thrown knife would have. The answer lies in the nature of the Dark Side of the Force, and in the particular skills and powers used. According to the Star Wars role-playing game, control is usually the first Force skill a Force user learns, though some begin with the sense skill. Alter is typically the last Force skill to be learned—for good reason. To understand why, let's consider each skill separately.

The Sense Skill

Sense is a relatively passive skill which allows a person to perceive the Force, without actually manipulating it. It is a skill of reception rather than manipulation. Consequently, persons using a Force power that exclusively relies upon sense stand very little possibility of tilting the balance between Light and Dark in the Force around them, hence little chance of succumbing to the seductive power of the Dark Side. The powers which fall under the sense skill demonstrate that, things such as Life Detection, Life Sense, Magnify Senses, and Sense Force. Even Receptive Telepathy—which some people might think an invasive thing—is actually passive in nature. The Force user does not so much enter a person's mind as pick up thoughts boiling across the surface—which is why so much more can be perceived from willing, "open" subjects. And while Combat Sense might seem a dangerously violent power for Force users, it simply "highlights" opponents and "telegraphs" their actions; it does not directly enhance the user's attacks or defenses.

Only in isolated spots in the galaxy that have been strongly tainted by the Dark Side is there really any danger of a sense user being overcome, and even then, sense gives the user advance warning of that taint, so that the control skill may be brought into play.

The Control Skill

Control is a less passive skill than sense, which might seem to make its user more susceptible to the powerful, destructive lure of the Dark Side. It can, for instance, be used to directly enhance the damaging power of a blow delivered with a light sabre. But control also serves as its own guardian. The skill is turned inward, focusing upon command of the user's own mind, body, and connection to the Force, so the discipline involved in using the skill promotes the Force user's internal balance, inherently making that person less likely to succumb to the Dark Side's hunger for destruction. For this reason, most Jedi are trained in the use of control before anything else. Their masters know that the power of the Force—especially the ready might of the Dark Side—can be a terrible temptation for novices, and training in control promotes the discipline needed to resist that temptation.

On the other hand, that same control can be used to quickly tap the Dark Side's power, for those inclined to do so. This is why so many violent powers are listed under control—or a combination of control and another Force skill—in the role-playing game and its supplements. Things such as Force Lightning, Telekinetic Kill, Create Force Storms, and Drain Life Essence draw directly on the Force's destructive element, virtu-

ally inviting the Dark Side into their user's soul. Control Mind, while less overtly destructive, still "does violence" to its victims by quashing their will and forcing them to act against their wishes. (In contrast, the saving grace of Affect Mind is that it does not compel its victims to any particular action, but instead toys with their perceptions, tricking them into acting as the Force user would hope. Still, the nicety of the difference is ticklish, and undoubtedly some Jedi have gained a taint of the Dark Side from using Affect Mind to cause direct harm—as in deluding someone into stepping on an illusory cover over an open pit.)

And Transfer Life is, of course, virtually the darkest of Force powers. With it, the user steals the victim's body, displacing the target's psyche with his own, thereby destroying that person in a manner much more horrible than simple murder. To the Dark Side, the difference does not mean much: destruction is destruction. But in most cultures this sort of act is considered much more evil than physical violence, so the perpetrator corrupts himself even beyond the lure of the Dark Side.

Doppleganger is a less obviously corrupting control power, yet according to the Dark Force Rising sourcebook, it too yields its user a Dark Side point. The reason is the same as when using Telekinesis to injure, as we'll see in a moment.

The Alter Skill

In terms of opening oneself to the lure of the Dark Side, alter is the most dangerous of Force skills to use, which is why Jedi masters tend to teach it last. Unlike sense and control, which are focused inward, alter reaches outward, using the Force in other creatures, surrounding objects, and even the environment itself to achieve its effect. In imposing their will upon the external in this way, Force users are implicitly on shakier ethical ground.

The dangers to one's soul in using powers like Force Lightning, Feed on Dark Side, Control Mind, Telekinetic Kill, Create Force Storms, Doppleganger, Drain Life Essence, and Transfer Life—all of which draw on the alter skill with some combination of control and/or sense—are described above. But what is most significant is that both of the purely alter powers—Injure/Kill and Telekinesis—result in a Dark Side point or the danger of one when they are used. That isn't true of either of the other Force skills.

In the case of Injure/Kill, the reason for the Dark Side point is obvious. Clearly, the Dark Side of the Force exults in those who use it for destruction. And therein lies the answer concerning why a Force user gains a Dark Side point when using Telekinesis to cause damage.

The Reaction of the Dark Side

The Dark Side revels when it is used for violence—justifiable or not—and because the user is in full contact with the Force at that moment, he or she feels the swell of exultation deep within. It isn't an issue of whether the Force user did good or evil by the act. Rather, it is simply a sudden wash of temptation to wreak even further havoc. In other words, the taint of darkness comes not from inside, from the Force user's choice to do the deed, but instead from outside, from the reaction of the Force itself. Only by dedication to acts of good can the Force user rid himself of the resulting nagging temptation to use the Force for even more violent acts. Using Telekinesis for violence, and using Doppleganger at all, while seemingly innocent acts, tap the Force in a dangerous manner, leaving the Force user open for corruption.

With this explanation in mind, let's return to the opening scene of this article, when the Jedi decides to act with telekinetic violence.

"Which will it be, Jedi?" the knife wielder taunted. "Do you save the city, or Ackbar's sorry hide?"

Lowering his lightsaber, Fahjay closed his eyes and reached out through the Force. He gave a telekinetic tug, and the knife leapt from the one terrorist's hand, flashed across the room, and buried itself to the hilt in the other terrorist's chest. As the dead man tumbled away from the control panel, Ackbar wrestled his assailant to the floor.

But unknown to Ackbar, Fahjay wrestled with an adversary of his own. As life slipped away from the stricken terrorist, the Dark Side of the Force flared in the Jedi, reveling in the destruction and death he had shaped with it. Yes, it seemed to whisper gleefully, that is how any who venture to stand against you should be dealt with. How dare they challenge one who can slay them with but a thought. Stoically, Fahjay recited to himself a portion of the Jedi Code, "There is no emotion, only peace." And though calmness settled over him in response, he knew he would bear the stain of this death on his soul for a long time to come.

❑

illustration by Robert Gee

Video Drone

Out of the Pages of the Funny Books

by Brian & Donna Thomsen

Over the years comic strips and books have undergone many major changes. Heroic figures of the newspaper and radio era like Dick Tracy and the Shadow are now looked at in terms of high camp, while the brooding heroes of Action and Detective comics have undergone transformations that sometimes border on the pathological. In a strange case of reverse evolution, the bright and cheery colors of comics of the past have made way for a new era of stark tales of darkness told in shades of black and white.

More than a few movies have gone along for the ride.

The Crow

1994
Starring Brandon Lee, Ernie Hudson, and Michelle Davis
Directed by Alex Proyas

The Crow is a dark, brooding story of love and vengeance. Based on the J.O'Barr comic of the same name, the film gained notoriety during its filming because of the accidental, on set death of Brandon Lee.

In a nutshell, Eric Draven(Lee) and Shelly Webster live a simple but happy life in a funk Detroit loft. Local thugs want them out so that they can control the building and the neighborhood. Shelly and Eric refuse to leave, and the scummy bad guys pay a visit on them on the night before the couple's wedding. Shelly is viciously attacked, and Eric is killed when he tries to intervene.

$$$$	Worth full price of opening day or the evening show
$$$	Worth a $3.00 matinee
$$	OK for rental
$	Wait for television
¢	Buy it when it's in the one-dollar bin (and then reuse the tape for recording when you're done)

A year later, Eric is escorted back from the land of the dead by a crow so that he might avenge their deaths. Against the fiery backdrop of Detroit's Devil's Night when the local criminal element raise incendiary havoc for fun and profit, Eric tracks down the murderous gang members, one by one.

The tale is told by Sarah (Michelle Davis), a neighborhood girl who loved the couple and still mourns their deaths. Filmed mostly at night and in the rain, this is by no means a happy story, but a strangely compelling one.

♀ I did not want to see this film. (Did I state that clearly enough?) After reading about Lee's death on the set, I didn't even think it should be released. But after seeing it, I changed my mind.

Lee's performance is the centerpiece of this beautifully simplistic gothic tale (which does take some liberties from the James O'Barr comic upon which it is based). He is convincing as a tortured soul driven to savagery by the brutality around him. Eric's interactions with Sarah are particularly touching, and his exchanges with Ernie Hudson's beat cop add a lighter touch.

Michelle Davis is terrific as the streetwise kid who is tough enough to mouth off to the driver who nearly runs her over (as well as to the apparent stranger who saves her), yet caring enough to put fresh flowers on Eric's and Shelly's graves.

The film work in this movie is stunning. Dizzying rooftop vistas and rain-drenched cityscapes make this dark and compelling viewing. Particularly striking are images of Eric backlit by the setting sun and the various crow outlines he leaves at each murder site. A nomination in the art direction or cinematography categories at the Academy Awards would be well deserved.

Admittedly, sitting through this movie, with its themes of death and redemption, is sometimes difficult, knowing what happened to the star. But considering his outstanding performance it would have been wrong to let it languish on the shelf.

Rating: $$$1/2

♂ Definitely a first class BVM (beautifully violent movie). Great fights, great bad guys, a bit of the unexpected, and marvelous performances. An added bonus - a meaningful story line, and first rate production values.

If you haven't guessed, this was my choice at the box office. Having seen *Twilight Zone: the Movie* and at least one of the *Faces of Death* series, it's fair to say that I have no trouble in putting the reality behind the filming on the back burner.

The art direction knocked me (there were also good fight scenes). Proyas and company successfully transferred a black and white comic book to the screen in color without losing any of its monochromatic values (Lee really kicks butt). The supernatural elements that add to the overall eeriness neatly skirt issues of pragmatic skepticism by just refusing to address them (does anyone really believe that a crow escorts your soul to the afterlife? Who knows and who cares?). Finally, the exceptional camera work makes watching the film a virtual roller coaster (Crow-cam! Crow-cam!).

The Crow isn't just one great film, it's two : one for the Van Damme and Lee crowd, the other for the Bergman and Truffaut club. Who can ask for more?

Rating: $$$$

Dick Tracy

1990
Starring Warren Beatty, Al Pacino, and Madonna
Directed by Warren Beatty

Warren Beatty produced, directed and starred in this high-voltage adaptation of the popular Chester Gould comic strip. Though critically acclaimed in some circles and the recipient of three Academy Awards, the film was not considered to be a commercial success. It bombed.

Tracy tries to break the criminal stranglehold Big Boy Caprice (Al Pacino) has on the city while wooing Tess Trueheart (Glenne Headly) and looking after The Kid (Charlie Korsmo), the nameless street urchin following him around. Breathless Mahoney (Madonna) is a key

witness in the case but won't testify unless Tracy leaves Tess for her.

The plot is almost secondary. The real fun of this film is picking out the actors in supporting roles. Charles Durning, Mandy Patinkin, Paul Sorvino, Dustin Hoffman, Dick Van Dyke, James Caan, Michael Pollard, and Estelle Parsons all play familiar characters from the strip (many under pounds of make-up).

The film won an Oscar for Best Song, " Sooner or Later (I Always Get My Man)", written by Stephen Sondheim. Also honored was the Art Direction, and the Make-up Design.

♀ This is the way a comic strip movie should be done. Instead of simply transplanting the characters into a live-action world, this film recreates the comic strip world the characters live in. Shot in brilliant primary colors, the whole film has a rich comic book feel to it. The sets, more deco than gothic, provide a sparkling backdrop to the action.

Warren Beatty anchors the film admirably as the venerable crime-fighter. Al Pacino is a standout as Big Boy Caprice, chewing up the scenery every chance he gets. Madonna, another easy target for critics, simply has to sing and look sexy, which, most would agree, is not a problem for her. Charlie Korsmo's "the Kid" provides much of the film's humor. His scenes with Beatty are sweet without being syrupy. Indeed much of the humor here springs from the source material, rather than standing outside of it poking fun.

The movie was far more entertaining than I expected and should have attracted a larger audience than it did.

Rating $$$

♂ The obnoxious attempts at merchandising associated with this film turned me off. I didn't find the action figures (even "the Bum" figure who supposedly inspired the politically correct mafia to protest on behalf of the homeless), but the fast food giveaways, wrist radios, and silly hats and coats, all of whose promos seemed to dominate the television airways, managed to conspire to make me really not want to see this film.

So it came and went in the theaters without my seeing it (though I did buy the soundtrack thanks to the presence of Madonna the Jenny Lind of the second half of the twentieth century).

About a year later I found a beat up copy of the VHS tape in a bargain bin featuring tapes priced at $5 a piece, 3 for $10. Not wishing to pass up a bargain I frantically searched through the bin for 3 tapes I wanted. I found two and threw in *Dick Tracy* to increase the savings, figuring I could use it as a blank at a later date.

Surprise! It was definitely worth it.

True, Beatty wasn't as masterful as he was in *Reds* or *Heaven Can Wait*, and perhaps Pacino and Hoffman could have used a few mood suppressants, and maybe no sane man would have balked at the prospect of leaving dishrag Glenne Headly for the wonderfully breathless Madonna (Note:at this point in the story, Dick and Tess are not yet married, just good friends), but who cares? It was a first–rate fun film.

There's action. There's drama. There's music and dancing (even bad music and dancing thanks to Al Pacino).

Give this film a try. Play spot the star, although in some cases you have to look real fast (some of them got more exposure in the television commercials than they did on the screen).

Dick Tracy is fun for the whole family, and it won't put you to sleep (a rarity among family films in general).

Rating $$$

Unfortunately, we found a bit too much to crow about with these two titles so we will have to put off *The Shadow* and *Brenda Starr* until next time. ❑

Dispel Confusion

Have any dragons or elves ever died of old age?
David Haendler
Quincy, MA

Good question, since elves and dragons are so long lived—from 750 to 1,500 years—that they often meet their demise through combat, danger, or disease long before old age can claim them. However, in my experience I have encountered elderly elves—Lorac, Speaker of the Moon from the DRAGONLANCE® saga—who have died of frail old bodies finally giving up the spirit. While I have never witnessed a dragon die of old age in an adventure, I have read of dragons dying of old age in fantasy novels. Thus, the answer is "YES," elves and dragons have died of old age. It is, perhaps, only our limited perspective on time as short lived humans that makes them seem to live forever.

Are the answers you provide to our questions official responses from TSR, Inc. or merely your opinion?
Kirk Jameson
Lincoln, NE

I'm often asked if my answers are official rule calls from TSR or not. The answer is yes and no. I personally research the answer for any questions, reviewing all the pertinent rule sets. I try to base my response upon my interpretation of those rules and my personal experience writing, editing, and running role playiong games for twenty years. Insofar as the rules are clear and succinct, and speaking from my position as Creative Director for Games for TSR, these responses certainly are official.

However, any responses are still just my opinion and they may be subject to dispute by any other rules lawyer—and I know a lot of you out there. I don't have a problem admitting I'm wrong if some new fact is brought up for consideration. The good news is that because role playing game rules are convoluted, the final call is always that of the Dungeon Master running the campaign and not that of some officious dude sitting in some office. Accept what you want, and write me with your interpretations when you disagree.

Hmmm...Kirk Jameson? Now where have I heard that name before? Reminds me of a pseudonym I heard used in high school when I lived in Lincoln.

– H

Author, Author!

Writing Guidelines for the Newszine

The RPGA® Network accepts submissions for POLYHEDRON® Newszine from all its members. The purpose of the Newszine is to support the interests of the members with appropriate features and regular columns. Primarily, we would like articles dealing with our supported RPGA settings. This includes articles detailing interesting locations or non-player characters appropriate to the chosen setting. For example, you could design a troupe of entertainers who have chosen to winter in Ravens Bluff, but who are being watched closely by the agents of the city; a witch doctor hermit living in the wilds of Malatra, undisturbed by the local predators; or the patrons of a shabby-looking Seattle pub who may provide reliable information about goings-on in the sprawl. Articles that offer suggestions on tournament play, forming a gaming club, improving playing or gamemastering skills, and running a tournament are also quite welcome. We will also accept manuscripts dealing with general gaming topics, but any such article must cover one of the game systems that the Network supports. Make sure that the submission is based upon the most recent edition of the game in question.

First Step: Query Letter

If you wish to get an article published in the Newszine, you must first send a query letter, in which you give us an idea of what your article will contain. Include in this letter the approximate length of the article and a short, detailed description of exactly what you will cover. It would also help if you would give us an idea of when you would be ready to submit the finished article.

Note that this policy is different from the way we have done things in the past, when we have accepted submissions without first being provided with a query letter. The sheer number of these submissions can be overwhelming, and as a result, we often take a long time to get to some truly deserving work. Furthermore, because of the delay in reading some submissions, we often miss an opportunity to publish an article that supports a particular issue's theme. The new policy will also benefit you, the writer. It can be disappointing to spend time writing an article just to have it rejected because we may not need it at the time or because it requires more work.

Sending a query letter can help save you valuable time and allows us to help you tailor your article to meet the needs of our readers. Please also note that as of July 1, 1995, we will no longer accept manuscripts that have not been preceded by a query letter; they will be returned unread to the sender if you have enclosed a self-addressed, stamped envelope (if you have not enclosed the envelope, we have no choice but to throw the manuscript away).

When you send your letter, you should also include a self-addressed, stamped envelope so that we can reply to you. Your letter must be typed neatly, and it should include your address, telephone number, and Network membership number. You do not need a separate letter for each submission idea you have; you may include multiple ideas in a single letter as long as each describes the length and contents of the proposed article.

Second Step: Submission

If we like your idea, we will send you a response asking you to send us the article; enclosed with our response will be a copy of our Standard Disclosure Form. You must send a hard copy (neatly typed, double-spaced, with one-inch margins on all sides, on white letter-quality, 8 1/2″ by 11″ paper) and an electronic copy (on 3 1/2″ disk). We would prefer that the electronic copy be written in Microsoft Word version 5.1 for Mac, WordPerfect for DOS, or Word for Windows. Also, it is a good idea to include an ASCII file as a backup to your main file.

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Your name, address, home telephone number, and Network membership number must appear on the upper right corner of the first page of the submission. Your name and the page number must be on each subsequent page.

Indicate on the outside of the envelope in which you send the manuscript that you have enclosed a Newszine submission.

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Any article submitted to us must be written in as professional a manner as possible. Spelling, punctuation, and grammatical errors detract from our ability to give your submission a fair reading, as do problems of syntax and organization. We strongly urge that you edit your manuscript thoroughly. You should show it to someone with strong editorial skills; another person's viewpoint may help improve your article. Often we do not have time to edit properly those manuscripts that possess numerous errors or which seem confusing, and this can result in an otherwise acceptable article going unpublished.

Make sure that your article is complete. It must have all relevant game statistics, maps, and whatever other support documentation the article needs. Place any tables, charts, or maps at the end of your article. Any sketches or maps you include must be

clear and legible. Furthermore, they should be done in ink. This makes it easier for our mapping artists to reconstruct your map. It is not necessary to provide artwork; we will have our artists take care of this.

Please do not try to make the manuscript look fancy by using any of the more "artistic" fonts; these are more difficult to read. We are interested in what you have written and how it is constructed, not in the way it is printed. A simple font will do.

Because the Newszine is only 32 pages long, we cannot publish long articles. We encourage you to submit articles of approximately 1,000–2,000 words. The maximum allowable length is 4,000 words. We usually have around 900–1,000 words per printed page, so this puts the maximum article length at around four pages. On an 8 1/2˝ by 11˝ double-spaced page with one-inch margins you will normally average around 250–300 words, so this will mean that your manuscripts should be no longer than 13–16 pages.

A note regarding Letters to the Editor and other similar submissions: The guidelines outlined above are primarily for writers interested in submitting articles to the Newszine. If you are submitting a Letter to the Editor, you do not have to follow such guidelines as those presented here. You should, however, make sure that any submission you make is as clear as possible. You may write a letter by hand, but it must be legible. If we cannot read your letter, we cannot adequately respond to it.

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• Never portray evil in an attractive light. You should instead present evil characters as foes.

• Do not give explicit details and methods of crime, drug use, or magic that could be duplicated and misused in real-life situations.

• Do not present crimes in such a manner as to inspire others to imitate criminals.

• Portray drug and alcohol abuse only as dangerous habits, not as something desirable or "cool."

• Do not represent agents of law enforcement, such as guards and constables, in such a way as to cause readers not to respect current authorities.

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• Profanity, obscenities, and vulgarity are not acceptable. Do not portray or imply lust and sexual perversion in your submission.

• It is all right to use drama and horror, but avoid detailed sordid acts and excessive gore. A good writer can imply situations without graphically detailing them.

• Do not ridicule, attack or even portray current religions in your manuscript. It is okay to portray ancient or mythological religions, but only in compliance with the other ethical considerations presented in these guidelines.

• Magic is an integral part of many fantasy role-playing games. However, we will not consider submissions that include actual rituals, such as incantations and sacrifices.

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If your article is accepted, we will send you three copies of a contract for your work, two of which you must sign and return to us. Within sixty days of the publication of your article, we will pay you the amount agreed in the contract. We will also enclose a copy of the contract after it has been signed by us, so you will have a copy for your records. If you are under the age of eighteen, a parent or legal guardian must also sign the contract.

You must understand that when you sign the contract, TSR, Inc., owns all publication rights to the article. (There are exceptions to this, particularly those cases in which the article is about game systems not owned by TSR, Inc.) This means that you cannot later sell the article to another publication, even in revised form, without our written permission.

Furthermore, the work must be your own. If you use material from other sources in your article, you are required to identify accurately your sources. Make sure that any quote matches exactly with the source from which you draw it. Be careful not to plagiarize (in other words, do not take someone else's writings and attempt to present them as your own). Authors bear full legal responsibility for their writing.

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Weasel Games

The Edge of the Bluff

by Lester Smith

Chess is not a weasel game. It is a mental wrestling match. There are no shifting alliances in chess, no surprise betrayals. The game is simply one individual trying to outthink another, trying to keep track of all of the possible permutations of this move as opposed to that one.

And yet there is a psychological element to chess, one that even allows a bit of bluffing. Once I played speed chess (in which players each get a limited amount of time to make their moves, with a special clock to keep separate track of each player's time expenditure) versus a ranked amateur (with just a smidgeon more dedication, he could have been a pro), and while I was little more than a "rank" amateur, he didn't know that. So I bluffed him. He would make a carefully considered move; then I would make an outrageous one, but with all the confidence I could project. As an end result, his flag went up on the clock—I do not exaggerate—just as he reached to put my king in checkmate. My bravado had kept him cautious long enough for me to win the contest of time. (Of course, that trick worked only once. I never even came close to beating him again.) Later I read, in one of the many chess books he loaned me, of a similar situation concerning a pro who lost a game to a ranked amateur primarily due to the psychological pressure of thinking "as a pro, I can't afford to lose to this ranked amateur."

If a straightforward conflict like chess can involve such psychological elements, it shouldn't come as any surprise that weasel games thrive on them. Bluffing, for example, is a very foundation stone of weasel gaming. To a great extent, in a weasel game you are as strong, or weak, as your opponents believe you to be. If they think you weak, they will attack without fear, and as one against many, you soon *will* be weak. On the other hand, if they think you strong, they will hesitate to attack, giving you the chance to entrench and *become* strong. (Though, paradoxically, if they think you too strong, they may gang up on you, and as one against many...)

This is one of the great, weaselly things about collectible card games. Because your opponents cannot know for sure what cards you have built into your deck, you can bluff at a level not possible in other types of games.

The Wisconsin Chainsaw Massacre

One sinister example of this involves a local group of regular *Jyhad* game players of which I'm part. Recently, I got the idea of building a *Jyhad* deck around the *Talbot's Chainsaw* card and a group of low-life (pun intended) vampires invested with the *Fame* card. The mystical chainsaw is quite a weapon in a scrap, but it also forces you to attack your own vampires unless the wielder is in torpor (i.e. paralyzed as a result of sunlight, stake, vampire claws, or such). Fame makes your prey lose significant blood whenever the famous vampire goes to torpor. So I thought, "Hmmm. I wonder if it would work to build a deck of low-cost vampires—ones I wouldn't mind losing—make them famous, and then send them to torpor with Talbot's Chainsaw." While at a convention, I mentioned the idea to an artist who works for Wizards of the Coast, and he said, "Sounds something like an 'Exploding Caitiff' deck." He went on to explain that deck as one consisting of low-level, famous vampires armed with grenades. In combat, they blow themselves up, forcing your prey to bleed as a result.

Once back home, I mentioned, offhandedly, to one of our local players my plan to build a deck along those lines, with lots of self-sacrificing vampires and a mystic chainsaw thrown in for good measure. The next thing I knew, the other players were all abuzz with the need to devise some method for stopping this nefarious deck of mine. And when I showed up for that week's game, I was greeted with the terse question, "Are you playing your exploding caitiffs tonight?" I didn't answer, just smiled smugly, content to let them all sweat. Although play soon made it obvious that I had not yet built the new deck, I went on to win that game, and I think the other players' initial nervousness gave me an advantage. It certainly demonstrated to me that mystery confers power in such games.

A Feinting Spell

Ed Stark joined the TSR fold not long ago, and I have watched him demonstrate another classic bluff again and again in lunch-time sessions of the BLOOD WARS™ game. Ed will play a nasty card, luring the other players to spend cards to stop it; then he'll play an even nastier card once their interventions are all used up. For example, he will lead off in combat with a *Spies in the Walls* card, so that he can look at his opponent's Battle Hand; his opponent will counter with a *Protection versus Fate* or *Crown of Protection* to negate the *Spies in the Wall* card; and Ed will then play a *Powers of Evil* [or Good, or Neutrality] *Intervene* card, which is what he hoped to play all along, thereby winning the conflict. The thing is, he does it so smoothly that I'm always surprised, even having seen it happen time and time before. I tip my hat to his weasilliness.

Next time, I'll talk a bit more about the bluffs possible in collectible card games, and other tactics they make possible. Until then, "Stay on top, and watch your back!" ❑

Bluffing...is a very foundation stone of weasel gaming. To a great extent, in a weasel game you are as strong, or weak, as your opponents believe you to be. If they think you weak, they will attack without fear, and as one against many, you soon will be weak.

The Living Galaxy

Alternate History Gaming Made Simple—Sort Of

by Roger E. Moore

It's November 9th, 1994, and you open your front door to the cold, crisp air to get your morning newspaper. Over breakfast you read about the midterm election results and everyone's analysis of the sweeping Democratic victories in the House, Senate, and governors' races. President Bush is obviously unhappy with the outcome, but he'll stick to his guns on certain domestic issues. America has to be strong, he says. There's still a war on.

You flip the paper over and read below the fold, munching toast. Many pockets of fighting still rage across the ruins of eastern Europe, particularly in the Ukraine and what's left of Yugoslavia. Most former Warsaw Pact nations are begging to join NATO. Nearly all the former republics of the U.S.S.R have declared independence from Moscow; some of them are trying to join NATO, too. The Soviet Army has pulled back from many areas and is now fighting rebels in its own ranks and rebellious oil-rich areas around the Caucasus. The military government in Moscow hasn't changed in the last three weeks, but no one knows who's really in charge. Everything went to hell when the 1991 coup leaders killed Gorbachev and Yeltsin.

You flip to page 2. The flood tide of refugees in western Europe is in the tens of millions. NATO says the sprawling refugee camps are generally calm, though fighting still erupts when food supplies are low. The last Soviet troops have pulled out of eastern Germany, heading for the wars in the Ukraine and Georgia. Even without open warfare on their soil, Germany, France, and other Western nations have suffered severe economic losses. New refugees are being turned back at gunpoint along the old Warsaw Pact borders. Everyone howls for more and more American aid.

Page 3. The incoming Democrats promise to reduce the deficit and revamp health care. They say that the rising crime rate can be cured only by crime-prevention programs, not more and bigger prisons. And they'll boost foreign aid to heal the wounds of the Soviet civil war. Three Democratic governors and two senators say they'll run for president in 1996. What's-his-name, Clinton, won't be among them this time.

You fold up the paper and get ready to leave for work. The world's a mess, you think, but it's the same old mess. Nothing ever changes.

What would it be like if history had come out differently? Some role-playing games explore this possibility, allowing modern-day characters to visit timelines where one thing or another changed in history. These fascinating campaigns are not well described in gaming literature, even now, but a few good Game Masters could change all that.

In issue #84, we looked at alternate-universe campaigns and some ways to make running those games easier for the GM. This article describes more GM's techniques that will help you run a better and more organized alternate-world campaign using a variety of game systems.

You might wish to look back at this column in issue #84 first, since it lays much of the groundwork for this column, but that isn't absolutely necessary. Also, for ease of writing, we'll coin a new word to replace the phrase "alternate-history universe": alterniverse.

Expanding the Possibilities

This column in issue #84 mentioned a number of role-playing games that make use of the alterniverse idea: Tri-Tac's Fringeworthy game, Steve Jackson Games' *GURPS Time Travel* rules, 54°40˙ Orphyte's *Timemaster* system, and BTRC's *TimeLords* game. It is not difficult to come up with a variety of other game systems in which alterniverses could make their home.

Take horror RPGs. Picture, for example, a machine, drug, or alien artifact in Chaosium's *Call of Cthulhu* game that transports users to various alterniverses where the usual monstrous entities attempt to conquer the world—or perhaps have successfully done so. (Yog-Sothoth vs. the Confederate States of America ... hmmm.) Paranormal gateways in other modern-horror games, such as Mayfair's *Chill* or GDW's *Dark Conspiracy* systems, might lead to similar lands where the undead have infested a Nazi-dominated Europe, or aliens plot against the Prime Minister of the Dominion of North America.

Certain Victorian-style RPGs, such as the AD&D® RAVENLOFT® system's *Masque of the Red Death* boxed set, the AMAZING ENGINE® *For Faerie, Queen, and Country* game, GDW's *Space: 1889* system, and R. Talsorian's *Castle Falkenstein* rules, already assume a divergence took place in our real-world history. Why not have heroes of each particular age explore what-if worlds parallel to their own—say, for example, one in which France or Spain, not Britain, rules a world-wide empire?

Alternate futures can be explored and crossed using near-future "ultra-modern" games like GDW's *Twilight: 2000* or *Merc: 2000* systems, R. Talsorian's *Cyberpunk 2.0.2.0.* game, or TSR's TOP SECRET/S.I.™ or AMAZING ENGINE *Kromosome* rules. For instance, what if Twilight: 2000 soldiers or government agents were sent to a dimension where World War III had never occurred or had ended quite differently—where atomic devastation was the rule or a clear Soviet victory had been achieved? A few good adventures could be brought out of such experimentation. Alterations to history in specific RPGs should always be relevant to the "official" game history, to highlight the distinctive features of the game and to hold and keep gamer interest in a coherent game world.

Espionage games could integrate alterniverses in the same manner. A Japanese spy from an alterniverse where Japan won against the U.S. in World War II, gaining the whole Pacific as the spoils of war, might find our own world quite startling and potentially hostile. Guessing that we might not react well to his world's version of things, he decides to set up a

spy network in the U.S. and monitor events to ensure that no one in our world discovers (and attacks) his own world. What will the CIA or FBI of our world do if it discovers this bizarre spy network? Palladium Books' *Ninjas & Superspies* game, with its extensive lists of Asian martial arts and high-tech gadgetry, might be handy for this type of campaign.

Even some historical games, such as TSR's BOOT HILL® system, could find room for an alterniverse or two. Consider a mysterious cave in the Old West that leads to a world unpopulated by humans, or one where Native American diseases wiped out the Europeans instead of vice versa, or one where the Spanish Empire still holds sway. How would our world's "cowboys and Indians" characters handle that? (Before they blow up the cave with dynamite, I mean.)

At this point, I should point out that some games already have very complex backgrounds and set-ups, and adding alterniverses to them would make too much of a mess. For instance, who needs an alternate version of the *Rifts, Shadowrun,* or *Torg* game? Far-future games, especially interstellar ones, are also questionable, as I don't see the fun in hopping from one Traveller or *Star Wars* alterniverse to another. There is just no gut thrill in going from the Shattered Imperium to a still-existing Third Imperium, or from the current *Star Wars* universe to one in which the Empire was never begun, or one in which the Rebellion never started. (Of course, I could be wrong!)

Indeed, there was a far-future interstellar-travel RPG, called *Reichstar*, in which the Nazis conquered the world and built a space empire. This possibility is quite intriguing, but it was founded on a change in real events, not a fictional future divergence in history, and is thus innately more interesting than the latter. And there was the "Mirror, Mirror" alterniverse of the *Star Trek* TV show, but that was a one-shot adventure based on philosophic dualism (i.e., what if everything good had been bad instead), not real history. I rest my case.

Logic and Consistency

There's more to creating an alterniverse than fudging with history. A good alterniverse campaign should have a core of strong themes for each new world that you, the GM, generate. These themes should on some level reflect on the "big picture" that we often fail to see in our daily news-watching.

One excellent example of this (perhaps the best example of them all) lies in Ward Moore's novel, *Bring the Jubilee*. Here, a Confederate victory at Gettysburg robs the world of a united U.S.A. The Confederates later conquer Mexico and the Caribbean, creating an apartheid, imperialistic empire. Slavery is abolished, but the severe repression of blacks and Hispanics goes unquestioned. Technological stagnation, slow economic growth, and grotesque ethnic warfare are found across the globe at levels unheard of in our time. What's left of the U.S.A. itself is backward, shrunken, and consumed with bitterness and poverty.

The consequences of the Confederate victory are shown to spread throughout history, growing ever larger with each passing year. (Call this the "ripple effect" of time alteration.) Postwar inflation ruins the U.S. economy. Transcontinental railroads are not built, so westward growth stalls out. America does not enter the Great War in 1917, so an Imperial German victory occurs. Nazism and Communism vanish but are replaced by an intolerant colonialism that crushes out innovative ideas of every sort in favor of supporting the status quo, which is never questioned to support its brutality and inhumanity.

Obviously, the author makes the point that a Confederate victory would have had disastrous consequences for not only the U.S. but the world as well. The importance of the U.S. in world affairs is thus greatly highlighted by comparing the Confederate alterniverse with our own world, and a critical theme ("The U.S., as a united nation, has done much good that we might not always appreciate") is established.

Admittedly, a clever author could also "prove" that a Confederate victory would have been good for the world, too. I don't think a GM from a Southern state would necessarily appreciate Ward Moore's point of view, which goes to show how political this sort of gaming can become. MacKinlay Kantor's *If the South Had Won the Civil War* is much friendlier to a Southern victory, though even it stresses the importance of cooperative effort between North and South in later years, and points up costly national losses as a result of the war (e.g., Alaska is not purchased from the Russians in the late 1800s, so it falls into the hands of the Soviet Union, is covered with missile bases, and threatens American security). Thus the theme of the value of a united U.S. is reinforced.

A core point here is that Ward Moore not only made a point but carefully buttressed it with reasonable extrapolations from facts. The more carefully an alterniverse is constructed, and the more clearly its themes are played out in a logical and consistent fashion, then the more effective that world becomes in play. If the historical change in your alterniverse makes no difference in the "big picture," then it isn't worth the bother. A theme can be subtle or blunt, but it must make a difference.

Alternating Themes

One little change can make all the difference. This is a frequent theme found in alterniverses from science fiction of every type, but it isn't the only one. Every alterniverse should have one or more specific themes behind it.

Let's look at the "Bush in '92" alterniverse mentioned at the start of this article. The idea for this alterniverse grew out of my wondering what it would have taken in order for Bush to have been elected over Clinton and Perot in 1992. Americans at the time appeared less concerned with foreign policy than domestic problems, which Clinton offered to resolve. If scandals had pushed Clinton out of the running earlier, Americans might still have elected another Democrat.

But if foreign-policy concerns were paramount, Bush might have made it to a second term. What if the 1991 Soviet coup plotters had killed their opponents, instead of imprisoning or ignoring them? The U.S.S.R. was already on the verge of social revolution and economic collapse that could no longer be averted. The coup and the subsequent revolt of the non-Russian republics might have led to a horrifying civil war that could have spread throughout Europe and Asia, spilling over into many former East-bloc nations.

The chances Bush would have been re-elected would probably be much improved; Americans don't like to change horses in deep water. But Bush would then inherit a devastated world.

The tendency for the U.S.S.R. to break apart is still there—but under vastly worse conditions than we have known in our own time.

What themes are created, then? Obviously, things could have been a lot worse. (This is a frequent theme in alterniverses, one fed by our fundamental desire to believe that we live in a good world. It would be very distressing to think we actually live in a bad one!) Obviously, too, given the alternate breakup of the U.S.S.R., some major historical events cannot be long delayed—a good theme. A "small" decision, like having two men (Gorbachev and Yeltsin) shot, might have huge consequences—a theme noted earlier. And, given the Democratic victories we project for 1994, even a reversal of history might confirm the popular notion that some things never change. In this case, what doesn't change is the fickleness of the American electorate, the wholesale dumping of one political party for another in 1994. It isn't necessarily true that some things never change (except, perhaps, human nature), but many people might hold it as a surface observation.

You have to be careful of the themes you pick; broad themes like the above are generally much better than narrow, partisan ones. Your own prejudices can negatively affect the world-creation process. For instance, despite the mess the world is in in our alterniverse, it is entirely possible to come up with a "good" world in which George Bush won re-election in 1992. The above set-up is merely one possibility among many. A Democratic GM is ill advised to single out Bush as a harbinger of disaster, as that is illogical, silly, and highly liable to be resented by the Republicans in your gaming group!

Keep the Numbers Down

If you plan to be the GM for an alterniverse campaign, you are advised to create only two or three alterniverses at most to begin with. In theory you could multiply the number of potential campaign worlds into the trillions and beyond, but—given the previous dictum that any change to history must make a difference in the campaign—some worlds are worthless to investigate.

Think for instance about an alterniverse in which the Americas are called the Columbias (after Columbus, of course), thus producing North Columbia, South Columbia, the United States of Columbia, the movie Columbian Graffiti, the "Columbian Gladiators" TV show, etc. If this is the major difference between that reality and ours, who cares?

Even with worlds that are worthy of exploration and interest, it helps to keep the numbers low because alterniverses are so complex and time-consuming to create and run. You also don't want to overexpose the players to a large series of "shallow" worlds in which fundamental world differences simply don't come out.

The bigger the differences between the few worlds you develop, the easier they will be for the players to grasp. There's no point in having five alterniverses covering five different possible outcomes of the American Civil War, all of which include the Confederate States of America taking up the usual position on the map. Pick widely separated changes in history with unique outcomes.

Take into account changes that could occur in every aspect of daily social life: people, politics, religion, languages, clothing, mannerisms, sports, military forces, schools, transportation, communication, kitchen utensils, weapons, everything. Feel free to gently push certain of these aspects of each alterniverse in different directions to further heighten world differences. If Spain had had more influence over the colonization of North America than either France or England, you might now have hacienda-style homes around the Great Lakes, guitar-and-trumpet music playing from radio stations all over, and other changes that essentially turn North America into North Latin America.

There's more to creating an alterniverse than fudging with history.

A Gift of Shock and Wonder

Little things count a lot when used well. When player characters first make the leap into an unfamiliar alterniverse, a good GM can set them up for a nasty punch by allowing them to make very simple discoveries that have enormous implications, clues that reveal the shape of Things That Might Have Been. For example, consider your personal reaction to finding:

- A £10 paper bill from the Royal Bank of New York, with Benedict Arnold's picture on it.
- A purple, all-cotton yuppie sweatshirt from Port-au-Prince University, with "Jewel of the Caribbean" written in French on the back and Napoleon Bonaparte's profile inside the university seal.
- The wreckage of a prop-driven attack aircraft displaying the Confederate Stars & Bars, with wing tanks full of jungle defoliant.
- An American businessman's 1967 passport allowing travel from California to Hawaii, with a Japanese Rising Sun approval stamp.
- A popular science-fiction novel from 1953, written by an award-winning American author named Adolf Hitler. (If you have trouble believing this one, read Norman Spinrad's SF novel, *The Iron Dream*.)
- A faded, weather-worn, rodent-eaten calendar for 1962, with nothing marked in it after mid-October.

Nothing here is fully explained, but you could say that what is implied shouts far louder than what is actually heard. Putting the tingle of fear and uncertainty into the spines of the players is difficult but richly rewarding. Layers of discovery must still be uncovered to find out the full details on how each world changed and what dangers and adventures might be lurking, but the players have strong clues to go on.

For each alterniverse, you should definitely create different material clues like the above and consider their emotional and intellectual impact on players in the game. Some of the above clues will probably stop the group cold in astonishment and horror; others will puzzle and confuse but keep the players intrigued until bigger shockers are uncovered.

Next month, more on the creation, care, and feeding of role-playing adventures in alternate timelines. Cheers! ❑

Weeds of Wonder

Useful Plants of Malatra

By Greg Ferris

Gather `round the fire, you children of the jungle. Let it be known by you that the wilds of our homeland can be harsh indeed. Even our mighty heroes and wise elders are, at times, at the mercy of the land. You must learn that, in times of need, the jungle itself can provide for its people. Beware, however, for just as an incautious man may find himself in the belly of the tiger, so too can malady befall one who is careless with the bounty of the wilds.

Below is a partial list of some of the more useful plants to be found within the jungles of Malatra. There are, of course, many others awaiting discovery; some of these will have benign properties, while others will be harmful or even toxic.

Most intelligent inhabitants of Malatra should be aware that plants like these exist. Heroes with herbalism, survival, or other appropriate skills should be allowed a proficiency check to identify or locate these plants.

Stikricki Bush

Part Used: Whole bush

Description: Found only in dry areas of the Rayana Savanna, this gnarled, woody bush appears dead even when flourishing. Actually, it is nothing more than a tangled ball of razor-sharp thorns. The bush seems to serve no other purpose than to shelter small animals which often seek its cover on the otherwise open savanna.

Uses: After carefully harvesting the bush and allowing it to dry in the sun (this normally takes 2-5 days, assuming that it is not the rainy season), the bush may be broken into many pieces. These pieces may then be used effectively as caltrops. Any person with bare feet moving through an area containing Stikricki bushes will suffer 1 hp of damage. In addition, he will have to make a successful save against paralyzation in order to keep moving through the caltrops. Two mature Stikricki bushes will bear enough thorns to cover effectively a 10 foot square area.

Tiki

Part Used: Root

Description: This distinctive plant has stems that vary in length from 2–4 feet. Broad leaves surround the plant, and its flowers are large and white with violet centers. The root is sandy brown and very bitter to the taste. The Tiki is found only in humid regions which receive a fair amount of sunlight.

Uses: For as far back as they can remember,the inhabitants of Malatra have been using the root of the Tiki plant. Anyone versed in the knowledge of this plant can boil the roots in water to create a thick, pungent brew which will slow poison as does the 2nd level priest spell *slow poison*. These benefits, however, are gained only if the perso-drinking the brew also gets complete bed rest.

Gualla

Part Used: Juice from stem

Description: This is a fairly large plant, growing to nearly 6 feet in height. The leaves range in color from light green to yellow and are long and thin. The flowers are delicate and yellow, and the Gualla produces clusters of golden berries. There is a common legend among various tribes that the Ancients brought Gualla with them when they came to Malatra.

Uses: Within the stem of the Gualla is a thick chartreuse juice. The juice has a luminescent property which causes it to glow in the dark. Objects or persons covered in Gualla juice will glow with a faint green light which will be visible from up to 60 yards away in the dark. The juice will lose its luminescence approximately 12 hours after being exposed to air, although it can be stored in an airtight container for months.

Magasorium

Part Used: Crushed leaves

Description: Magasorium is a short, stocky plant with thick, flat leaves. It is entirely green, except for black ribbing along its leaves. Magasorium grows abundantly throughout the Malatran jungle. However, since it

grows close to the ground, often it can be hard to find.

Uses: Magasorium is an excellent repellent against the many insects of the jungle. For personal use, the leaves are crushed and the juice is rubbed on the skin. This application will remain effective for approximately four hours (less if the recipient is engaged in strenuous activity). Some tribes also burn the plants in order to keep insects away from their villages.

Billitri

Part Used: Crushed leaves

Description: Billitri is a fragrant, delicate-looking plant with numerous slender leaves. It is commonly found on hills and on the sides of mountains. The stem is about 6 inches long and usually produces 3 flowers, which are lavender with golden centers in color.

Uses: The juice from the leaves of the Billitri is so fragrant that its scent will remain for days with a person who has applied it to his skin. Many hunters of Malatra use crushed Billitri leaves to mask their scent while stalking their prey. The fragrance is strong enough to mask their natural scent, rendering them difficult to detect by creatures that rely on their sense of smell. Some crafty heroes, when being chased by keen-nosed predators, have been known to lead the creatures through a patch of Billitri. Even in its natural state, Billitri's fragrance is strong enough to deaden temporarily the sense of smell of a creature that gets too close to the plants. Although this is not a guaranteed method of throwing off prey all the time, it has worked often enough to make it worth an attempt.

Biseechee Bush

Part Used: Berries

Description: This is a short bush with slender branches. It grows in dry soil, near the edges of the Rayanna Savanna. Its stems are covered with tiny, cactus-like thorns. The flowers are delicate and white, with four petals. Those harvesting the berries of the Biseechee bush must do so cautiously, for cobras often make their homes in the areas where these bushes are found.

Uses: The berries of the Biseechee bush have incredible healing properties. Many of the Nubari believe these bushes to be gifts from the Ancients. Eating the berries will heal 1 hp per berry, to a maximum of 4 hp over a 24 hour period. Unfortunately, these berries lose their special healing properties within a day, so heroes must seek them out whenever they need them.

Manriki Bush

Part Used: Berries

Description: This short bush looks very similar to the Biseechee bush and the one is often mistaken for the other. A close inspection will show that Manriki berries are a deeper shade of red and its flowers have only three petals. As with the Biseechee, the Manriki can be found on the outskirts of the savanna.

Uses: The berries of the Manriki bush are extremely toxic to most humanoids. Though they taste sweet and pleasant at first, they quickly cause intense headaches, nausea, and dizziness. Anyone eating them will need to save against poison at +2. If the save is failed, the victim will start to see spots shortly after ingestion. Within an hour, the victim will become blind. Any method of *slowing* or *neutralizing poison* will affect the onset of this blindness. The blindness will wear off on its own in 3d10 rounds. Blinded characters suffer a -4 penalty to their attack rolls, and their opponents gain a +4 to their attack rolls, for the duration of the blindness.

Manshooki Tree

Part Used: Vines

Description: The Manshooki is a towering tree foung in the deepest recesses of the jungle. It closely resembles a massive willow tree, with hundreds of vines dangling down to the jungle floor. The limbs of the Manshooki are more than strong enough to support humans. Many of the Malatran tribes build storage platforms on these trees, high enough off the jungle floor to protect their provisions from prowling jungle animals.

Uses: The vines of full-grown Manshooki trees are extremely strong and vary in length from 20 to 130 feet. As they are even stronger than hemp, more limber, and narrower in diameter, many inhabitants of Malatra prefer them to ropes woven from hemp. Unfortunately, the vines are not as durable, becoming dried out within 3d4 days after being removed from the tree, after which time they could break at any time.

❑

DM Invitational

Ladies and Gentlemen, Start Your Word Processors!

The RPGA® Network proudly announces this year's Invitational Game Master Contest to determine the best designers among all entrants. This contest is open only to members of the Network. You do not have to attend the 1995 GEN CON® Game Fair to compete.

Each contestant must design an adventure that displays his or her flexibility and creativity as an author.

Design Rules

- Write your name and Network membership number on every page of your entry.
- Entries must be typed. Computer print-outs are acceptable if they can be read easily. Do not use fancy fonts. Each submission should be double-spaced and should have a one-inch margin on all sides.
- Submit two copies of your con test entry to aid judge reviews.
- Each submission must include six encounters. Of those, one must be non-hostile, where the player characters negotiate; one must be a trap or dilemma; two must include a battle; one must be an obstacle; the sixth is left to your discretion.
- The entry must not exceed 32 pages.

Contest Entries

You may enter as many times as you like. The Network reserves the right to edit all submisssions before use. No other use of the materials shall be made without an agreement between the authors of the submission and the Network and TSR— and/or the company holding the copyright for the game on which the entry is based. Submitting characters for your tournament is optional, but welcome.

Design Categories

Your submissions must be for one of the following game systems: AD&D® 2nd Edition and AMAZING ENGINE® games from TSR, Inc., *Star Wars* from West End Games, and *Shadowrun* from FASA. All submissions must specify the level of characters for which the adventure is intended.

Judging Criteria

- Adherence to game rules.
- Good manuscript presentation, including accurate grammar, punctuation, spelling, etc.
- Descriptive ability — the skill to weave an image and mood throughout the presentation.
- Originality — this includes innovation in the use of existing creatures and items in an interesting and novel manner. This also includes the use of creatures and items which you create.
- Fun. Is your scenario enjoyable? Would people playing this have a good time? This does not mean that you need to present a comic adventure. Even a frightening RAVENLOFT® adventure can be fun to play.
- All entries must be postmarked by July 8, 1995 to qualify.

- **Grand Prize:** $100 TSR, Inc. gift certificate, two-year renewal to the RPGA Network, and an engraved plaque.
- **First Place:** $50 TSR, Inc. gift certificate, two-year renewal to the RPGA Network, and an engraved plaque.
- **Second Place:** $25 TSR, Inc. gift certificate, two-year renewal to the RPGA Network, and an engraved plaque.
- **Third Place:** Two-year renewal to the RPGA Network and an engraved plaque.
- We reserve the right to award additional prizes for Honorable Mention.

Official Entry Form
Network Invitational Design Contest

This form or a copy of it must be completed, signed, and returned with each entry. The entrant warrants to TSR, Inc. that all submissions are original and do not infringe upon the rights of third parties.

Statement of entry and agreement: I hereby enter the work described below in the 1995 RPGA® Network Invitational Game Master Contest. I agree to the terms and conditions of this contract as set forth in the rules and this Official Entry Form.

Title of Entry _____
Name of Entrant _____
Network Membership Number _____
Signature of Entrant _____
Street Address _____
City/State/Province _____
Country, ZIP/Postal Code _____

Legal guardian: _____
(for submitters under the age of 18)

Game System: _____
Level of Characters: _____

Classifieds

For Sale: Orig. DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® action figures, var. prices. *Assault on Eagle Eyrie* print (Jeff Easley, lim ed.), $50, Larry Elmore's *Swordsong* Trilogy 1-3 and *Silver & Steel* 1, $30 ea., Clyde Caldwell's *Kingdom of Knives* 1-2 $30 each. Also, miniatures (painted or unpainted) at discounts, and more! Send a SASE to: Chris Perry, 23309 Richfield Rd, Corning CA 96021-9352.

For Sale or Trade: *How to Host A Murder*, AD&D® game, DARK SUN®, SPELLJAMMER®, *Dark Conspiracy*, *Megatraveller*, *Car Wars*, *Fantasy Hero,* and more. Also have AD&D, *Magic*, *Star Trek* and other cards. Please send a SASE for list. Send to: Gary Watkins, 10040 Lewis Ct., Westminster CO 80021-3731.

For Sale: Many AD&D game products, back issues of DUNGEON® Adventures and DRAGON® Magazine. Send 78¢ (in stamps please) for a complete listing to: Peter Hemmer, 5 Grand St, Apt 3, Oneonta NY 13820.

For Sale to highest offer: DRAGON Magazine collection, mostly complete #40-200+, two ex-cond copies of #148. Plus other titles. Thomas Ruddick, 1070 Springbrook, Piqua OH 45356.

Florida: Hullo World! I'm lookin' for pen pals, any age or sex, who are interested in books, writing, music,... um...you get the point, right? Tiffany dePasteur, Rt 3 Box 2350, Madison FL 32340

Florida: Anyone living in Brevard County, Florida interested in forming a Network Club please contact Michael Popovich, 5570 Datura St., Cocoa FL 32927 or call (407)-636-6978.

Georgia: Coming soon from: "The Gamer's Advocate": Treasure Chest, a cornucopia of gaming items that gamers such as yourself wish to buy and sell. All subscribers get one free advertisement space per issue. Subscription costs $15 annually. If not satisfied, keep the first issue and cancel the rest of your subscription for a full refund. Send check or money order to: "The Gamer's Advocate", P. O. Box 210, Conyers GA 30207. Please include your full name, address, and phone number. Send SASE for free brochure.

Illinois: Looking for players in the Alton area. Am interested in trying play by mail. I play AD&D 2nd Edition and *Shadowrun* 2nd Edition. Will play anything as long as you teach. My address is: Justyn Stahl, 1703 Seminole, Godfrey IL 62035.

Illinois: Are you tired of game companies telling you what you want? Here's your chance to voice your desires. Within the next year, I will begin publishing a line of fantasy roleplaying products. I am very interested in knowing what you would like to see in print, as well as what you like about fantasy roleplaying in general. Also, if you are a fantasy artist, or a group willing to play-test products, please contact me. Roy Penro, 305 W. Martin St., Grayville IL 62844.

Attention GEN CON® Game Fair Judges!

Due to space considerations, slot 9 of the LIVING CITY Benefit *The Dogs of War* and slot 13 of the Aussie *Paranoia* Feature have been canceled. These two slots are not listed in the pre-registration book, and are unavailable to players. Judges who signed up to referee these events with a judge appeal form will be given alternate slots. Members must still judge three slots to get into the show under the special RPGA® Network rate. There is also an error in the pre–reg book listing of the club event *The Fourth Wish*. Finals for this event are in slots 12 **and** 13. Plan your schedules accordingly.

Kansas: Buy/sell/trading RPG's and *Magic* cards. Send want/sell list to V. Daniel, 3725 Whispering Brook, Wichita KS 67220. or via e-mail, babayaga@southwind.net.

Maryland: Dragonslayers Unlimited is inviting all gamers around the country and the world to join our unique gaming club. What makes our club different from any other gaming club is that we are a play–by–mail gaming club. Our members have a wide variety of interests and are always looking for new and interesting games to play. For more information contact: Dragonslayers Unlimited, c/o Bill Brierton, 12420 Old Colony Drive, Upper Marlboro MD 20772-5000.

Massachussetts and General: I am looking for a few serious AD&D roleplayers. I am starting a new group. DM's and players are needed. Also I need the special scratch and sniff Beavis and Butthead card #6. And also the Games Workshop module "Free in the Mountain" for the *Warhammer Fantasy* role-play game. I am willing to buy and trade for these, please contact Sanford Freedman, 135 Brentwood Cr., N. Andover MA 01845. e-mail address Donald5506@aol.com.

Texas: 16 year old male DM/player looking for a gaming group in northwest San Antonio, Texas. I have played several settings but prefer the FORGOTTEN REALMS® campaign. Please write to: Alexander Badillo, P. O. Box 690392, San Antonio TX 78269.

Utah: I am a 14 year old male gamer new to the Network. I am looking for male or female players, ages 10–adult, to join our "Champions of Fantasy" game club in the Southeastern Utah area. We play the AD&D 2nd Edition game on weekends and we accept either Network or non-Network game players. I am also looking for a pen pal. Please write if interested: "The Champions of Fantasy" game club, c/o Sam Sampier, Club Coordinator, P. O. Box 435, Cleveland UT 84518.

Trading Cards Wanted: SPELLFIRE™ cards 1994 booster set 1: numbers 1,2, 6-9, 11, 12, 14, 15, 18-20, 22-24, 27, 38, 42, 43, 61, 62,68, 113-115, 117-122, 126, 127, 131-133, 136, 144, 168, 169, 175, 178-180, 185, 192, 200, 221-223, 248, 262, 266, 270, 281, 305, 323, 325, 327, 339, 344, 352, 354, 362, 366, 367, 371, 379, 393. Can no longer find booster decks. Many cards for trade of same set. Write to: Martin Meader, P. O. Box 606, Hartford VT 05047.

Conventions

Configuration 6, June 16-18, Tulsa OK — A gaming convention with 24–hour gaming. Includes: AD&D® game, RPGA® Network and LIVING CITY™ tourneys, *Magic: the Gathering*, *Shadowrun*, *Vampire* LARP, *Warhammer*, and many others! Also: Dealers, art, animation, parties, open gaming and APOKRYPHA demo. Location: Tulsa Days Inn, 8201 E. Skelly Dr. Reservations 918-665-6800. For more information contact: Wizard's Asylum 918-250-2077. Or write: War and Role Playing Games Club, 900 Asp Ave., Room 215-A, Box 304, Norman OK 73019.

Genesis 95, Junio 21, Acapulco, Gro. Mexico Esta convención tendra lugar en la biblioteca publica federal #22 (Plaza central Juan N. Alvarez en el centro de la ciudad). Eventos incluyen torneo de AD&D game sancionado por RPGA Network y una presentación de el farallon de los cuervos o ciudad viviente. También tendremos comics, otros juegos de rol e invitados especiales. Para mayor información, favor de escribir a: Antonio Olivar Zuñiga, Rio Ixtapan #2, Col. Vista Alegre, C.P. 39560 Acapulco, Gro. MEXICO. Tel. (74) 85-08-68. Fax (74) 86-89-68.

Knight Games, June 23-25, Brooklyn, NY Join us at St. Ann's and the Holy Trinity Episcopal Church for two-and-a-half days of fun and games, all for the benefit of the Brooklyn Children's Museum. Planned events include six RPGA Network tournaments (including AD&D Game, *Call of Cthulhu*, *Shadowrun*, and *Marvel Super Heroes*), plus *Earthdawn, BattleTech, Axix and Allies,* and many other events. Space is limited, so pre-registration is recommended. For more info, write: Knight Games, PO Box 3041, Brooklyn, NY 11201, or call David Samuels at (718) 763-0778.

Ben Con '95, June 23–25 Denver, CO—The first gaming convention devoted to charity! Features include an art show, games auction, seminars, dealers' room, a *Magic: The Gathering* room, RPGA Network events, a *Vampire* ball and blood drive, *Call of Cthulhu, Shadowrun, Earthdawn, M:tG* tournaments, war, board, and miniatures games, and much more! Non-gaming events, too, so bring the whole family! Margaret Weis is the guest of honor with *M:tG* artists, game designers, and a few surprise guests also in attendance. Located at the Sheraton Hotel in Lakewood, discounted room rates are available for convention-goers. Call (800) 325-3535 to reserve a room, and be sure to mention Ben Con. For additional convention info, contact: Ken Ritchart, 1024 Sagebrush Way, Louisville, CO 80027, or call (303) 665-7062. Ask about VIP registrations.

Kulcon III, June 30-July 2, Topeka, Kansas–This convention will be held at the Topeka Ramada Inn. Special guests include Steve Jackson, Bruce Nesmith, Tom Dowd, Dave Gross, and Wizards of the Coast, including artists of *Magic:the Gathering* cards. Games include three Living City adventures and a total of 10 RPGA® Network events. Also featured are a *Vampire* LARP, miniature and board games, Japanese animation, computer gaming, autograph sessions, three benefit events, and a raffle to benefit the United Way. For more information, call (913) 864-7316, or write Kulcon, 400 Kansas Union, Lawrence, KS 66045. For hotel information, call Brenda Maupin Tour at (913) 749-0700.

Origins `95, July 13-16, Philadelphia, PA Celebrating its 21st annual International Game Fair & Expo in Philadelphia, PA, Origins will feature over 1000 on-site events, including the *M:tG* National Championship and first-run Living City events, with guests of honor including James Lowder, Margaret Weis, Scott Douglas, and countless game designers. Call or write today for your free 96 page color pre-reg book. Pre-reg weekend badge price is $34.95. Write to Andon Unlimited, Origins `95, PO Box 1740, Renton, WA 98057-1740. Phone (206) 204-5815. Email: Andon@aol.com.

Grand Game Con 95, July 15 & 16 Grand Rapids, MI—Godfrey Lee Middle School, 1335 Lee Street, SW. We are having the following events: RPGA Network events (Living City, Living Jungle, Virtual Seattle, *Shadowrun,* AD&D® Game and AD&D Masters), AD&D Game, *GURPS, BattleTech, Rifts, Magic:The Gathering* (sanctioned), *Jyhad, Star Wars, Call of Cthulhu, Shadowrun,* and much more. Doors open at 8 a.m. Events begin at 9 a.m. Admission is $8 for one day, $15 for two. For info or to judge, contact: Leon Gibbons, 13910 Olin Lakes Road, Sparta, MI 49345-9524.

Dexcon IV, July 20–23 Somerset, NJ—Double Exposure, Inc. once again brings you Dexcon, New Jersey's largest gaming convention, held at the Somerset Raddison Hotel. RPGA Network events include AD&D game, DARK SUN® setting, RAVENLOFT® setting, *Paranoia, Call of Cthulhu,* and *Shadowrun.* Living City events planned include a three-round feature, a two-rounder, and two single rounds, all first run. There will also be a Living City Special event for 6th Level characters and higher. Finally, a Masters/Grandmasters/Paragon event, as well as a Living Jungle event will be included. Other activities include war gaming, interactive role-playing, Sugarfest, anime, the famous con suite, and miniature recreations of famous Star Wars battles. Visit the huge dealer room and join nonstop *Magic: The Gathering* tournaments. For more information, call (718) 881-4575.

Quincon X, July 21–23 Quincy, IL—It's our tenth birthday, and you're invited! Three days of gaming, including role-playing (RPGA Network events), miniature events (fantasy and historical), card games (*Magic, Jyhad, Spellfire,* etc.), and board games. Auction on Saturday. Rates are $12/weekend, $5/day. For more information send a SASE to: Quincon X, P.O. Box 3892, Quincy, IL 62305–3892.

DarkCon 2, July 28-30, Norman, OK The Southwest's largest gaming club invites you to participate in the hottest event this summer. Darkmoore proudly features the Sixth Annual "Player of the Year" tournament, along with many other fine gaming events, including *M:tG* tournaments, historical and fantasy miniatures, RPGA® Network Living City events, and much more. For more info, contact Nathan Carpenter, 624 SW 24th, Moore, OK 73160. Phone (405) 794-7624.

CALLING ALL NETWORK JUDGES

GEN CON® Game Fair 28, August 10th-13th

The RPGA® Network is proud to support the 1995 GEN CON with all-new tournaments, informative seminars, and special events for our members. As always, the backbone of the Network's Game Fair presentation is the tournament program. Unfortunately, tournaments don't run themselves. The Network needs people like you to help us support the show. **How about it?**

Judges who run at least three gaming sessions for the RPGA Network pay only a $10 admission to the convention. In addition, they receive points in the Network's international ranking system. This invitation is open to all judges, not just members of the Network— though you do have to be a member to run certain events. **We will consider only judges who run three events or more.**

Here's how it works: indicated below what type of game systems you know, what Network events you wish to play, and which slots you're available to judge. If there are specific events you wish to judge, circle them on the reverse side of this form, otherwise we will schedule you where we need the most help.

If you are not running your own events at the 1995 GEN CON Game Fair, this form and a check or money order for $10 (ten dollars, USA) will be enough to register you for the convention—provided you are accepted as a judge.You must still pay for any events you register to play; the above fee is only your admittance to the Game Fair as a judge for the Network. You can register for events through the GEN CON Game Fair Pre-Registration booklet, which will be mailed to you this spring. If you have already registered through Early-Bird, you do not need to send in $10.If you plan to attend the 1995 GEN CON Game Fair and would like to help the Network by judging our events, please complete this form, enclose a check or money order for $10, and mail it to:

GEN CON Game Fair 1995
RPGA Network Judge Appeal
201 Sheridan Springs Road
Lake Geneva, WI 53147

RPGA Network Membership Number: _____
Name: _____
Address: _____
City: _____
State: _____ **Postal Code:** _____ **Country:** _____
Day Phone: _____ **Evening Phone:** _____
I will arrive at the Game Fair (day & time): _____
I'm leaving the Game Fair (day/time): _____

I am willing to judge any Network event that uses the following rules: _____

I am available during the following time slots (minimum of three) that I have marked with a "J." Do not schedule me for slots marked with a "P," as those are the slots I wish to play. **Do not mark slots below if you circle events on the reverse side of the form.**

___slot 1 (8 a.m. to 11:45 a.m. Thursday)
___slot 2 (Noon to 3:45 p.m. Thursday)
___slot 3 (4 p.m. to 7:45 p.m. Thursday)
___slot 4 (8 p.m. to 11:45 p.m. Thursday
___slot 6 (Noon to 3:45 p.m. Friday)
___slot 7 (4 p.m. to 7:45 p.m. Friday)
___slot 8 (8 p.m. to 11:45 p.m. Friday)
___slot 9 (8 a.m. to 11:45 a.m. Saturday)
___slot 10 (Noon to 3:45 p.m. Saturday)
___slot 11 (4 p.m. to 7:45 p.m. Saturday)
___slot 12 (8 p.m. to 11:45 p.m. Saturday)
___slot 13 (8 a.m. to 11:45 a.m. Sunday)

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1995 Network Events

	Thursday					Friday					Saturday					Sunday
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
AD&D® Open, three-round elimination Sacred Heart by Gary Faye & Lyn James		●	●	●		●	●	●	●	S	S		F
AD&D BIRTHRIGHT™ Feature, three-round elimination Blood of Four Kings by Dave Gross & Steven Miller	●			●		●		●	S	S		F	
AD&D RATS, three-round elimination Rats Reunion by Kevin Melka		●				●	●			S	S		F
AD&D COUNCIL OF WYRMS™ Masters, one-round Role Reversal by John Terra			●				●				●		●
AD&D RAVENLOFT®, one-round Sacrificial Lambs by Bruce Nesmith	●			●			●				●		●
AD&D PLANESCAPE®, one-round The Poison Pen by Skip Williams			●			●			●	●			
AD&D Grand Masters, one-round Sewers of Justhaven by Scott Douglas & Craig Petillo								●		●			
AD&D Paragon, one-round Eusauria by Steve Hardinger		●											
AD&D RED STEEL™ Benefit, one-round Savage Steel by Tim Beach		●		●				●	●	●	●		
AD&D Network Club Event, two-round elimination The Fourth Wish by The PM Players				●				●				F	F
AD&D Living City Feature, one-round Only the Good Die Young by Kevin Melka	●			●				●					●
AD&D Living City Benefit, one-round The Dogs of War by Robert Wiese		●				●			●			●	
AD&D Living City Masters, one-round Petal of the Night's Rose by J. Alan Fawcett & Seth Forman			●					●					●
AD&D Living Jungle Feature, one-round Plague by Jean Rabe			●				●		●			●	
AD&D Living Jungle Challenge, one-round A Stitch In Time by David W. Baker				●							●		●
AD&D Living Jungle Network Club Event, one-round Lair of the Headshrinker by Nort Snadlacker						●		●					
AD&D DARK SUN® Special, one-round The Night the Dragon King Died by B. Slavicsek & L. Smith											●	●	●
Kromosome AMAZING ENGINE™, one-round Death in Venice by Wolfgang Baur	●							●					●
Shadowrun Virtual Seattle Feature, one-round Lights Out! by Wes Nicholson	●					●			●		●		
Timemaster Feature, one-round White Star Crossing by Don Bingle	●						●					●	
Star Wars Feature, one-round Prophet of Otherspace by Bill Slavicsek								●			●		●
Aussie Paranoia Feature, one-round TERM-(IN)-NATOR by Tim Parker & Wally Wheeler		●					●						●
Call of Cthulhu Feature, one-round The Inheritance by Gary & Kim Labrecque		●				●	●			●			

Attention Living City Players: During slots 10 and 11 on the lower floor of the Arena, the Network will host the second annual "Living City Bazaar." Bring your character and shop for magic items, visit the tavern and catch up on the latest gossip, apply for a position with the city guard, try your hand in the dueling arena, rent a room, bid on property . . . and don't forget the House of Thud! Admission is a $2 generic ticket. Many of the activities in the city are free. However, you can purchase some items with generic or gold-piece tickets.

Living Jungle Players: Network players of the Living Jungle will have a chance to meet and trade with the powerful and often grumpy witch doctor Bengoukee. The strongest witch doctor in all MALATRA™ will be available to barter with during slot 13 only, so don't miss it! **This event is open only to members who have characters in the Living Jungle tournament program.**

Judging slots are awarded on a first-come, first-served basis. To make sure you get to run the tournaments you desire in the slots you prefer, mail this form early.

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The Greatest Event on the GLOBE!

GEN CON® Game Fair 1995

August 10-13 MECCA Convention Center Milwaukee, WI

• **Bigger than ever with over 1,000 games of all kinds!** Computer, arcade, adventure, military, strategy, board, miniatures, role-playing, and mind-blowing virtual reality!

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• **More fun than ever with dozens of celebrity guests!** Like *Star Trek's* **James "Scotty" Doohan** on Science-Fiction Saturday, not to mention a stellar line-up of gaming greats on Thursday, Fantasy Friday, and Super Hero Sunday, too!

19 GEN CON 95™

• **More new game releases than ever!** Over 200 game makers are exhibiting their leading-edge products at the world's largest game store!

• **Over 1,300 events in all!** Including fantasy art show and sale, game auction, costume contest, film festival, and lots more!

Register for 1, 2, 3 or all 4 days! Write today for more information! Your Registration Packet will be sent in May if we receive your request before April 15.

Meet *Star Trek*® star James "Scotty" Doohan

Yes! Send me my GEN CON '95 Game Fair Registration Packet including the huge schedule of events for all four days, advance information on hotel accommodations, and more!

(Please print) Name

Address

City/State (Province) Zip Code

Daytime Phone Including Area Code

Mail to:
GEN CON Game Fair
201 Sheridan Springs Road
Lake Geneva, WI 53147 USA
FAX: (414) 248-0389
Email:TSRINC@AOL.COM

P.S. If you've already sent in your Early Bird Registration, you don't need to send this. Give it to a friend. Your Information Packet will automatically be mailed in May!

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Polyhedron® NEWSZINE

Issue #108

In This Issue:

- BIRTHRIGHT™ Character Races!
- LIVING JUNGLE™ Articles
- Ravens Bluff Trumpeter, Weasel Games and more

If your mailing label reads "Exp 6.95," this is your last issue. Renew today!

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